Reminiscences of Isaac M. Wise

Edited by David Philipson

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Reminiscences

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REMINISCENCES

BY

ISAAC M. WISE

Translated from the German and Edited with an Introduction by

DAVID PHILIPSON

Author of "The Jew in English Fiction," "Old European Jewries," Etc.

CINCINNATI

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INTRODUCTION

AMONG the most precious records in the world's literature are the autobiographical accounts wherein great men set forth the story of the development of their powers, and detail the conditions and circumstances under which they lived and among which they worked. If such men have been not only thinkers, but also toilers; if they have exerted a decisive influence at critical periods; if, by the force of their personality, they have been enabled to shape the trend of events, then the tale unfolding the secrets of their inner life and thought, and describing the motives that determined their activity, obtains an even added value. The autobiography in such cases has worth, not only as a psychological study, but also as a valuable historical contribution. The reminiscences of Dr. Wise have indeed this double character. They reveal not only the *man*, his thoughts, his strivings, his hopes, his ideals, during a most important epoch of his life, but they present also a most valuable account of the conditions prevalent in American Jewry during the critical period of the formative years. Isaac M. Wise was the most prominent figure

among the Jews of America during a long period of time. He came to this country at a juncture when an organizer and a builder along new lines was needed. The man and the opportunity met in this instance. How the man grasped the opportunity is told graphically in the story narrated in this volume.

These reminiscences of Dr. Wise's early life in America were published originally in *Die Deborah*, the German supplement of the *Israelite*. They appeared more or less regularly from July 3, 1874, to August 11, 1875. They cover the first eleven years of his life in America; *i. e.*, from 1846 to 1857. It will remain ever a cause of unfailing regret that he did not continue the story of his life to a later period. He himself once told the reason why he did not do so. He said that so many of the actors in the stirring scenes of his life were still living, that he did not wish to present some of these in an unpleasant light, as would have been necessary in describing the motives which actuated them in their opposition to his work and his plans for union among the Jewish congregations of the country. It was hoped that he had kept a diary; but diligent search among his literary remains has failed to bring any such production to light. Shortly after his death, the publication of the reminiscences in an English translation was begun in the *American Israelite*. They appeared every week

from May 24, 1900, to January 10, 1901. The words with which I introduced that publication of these memoirs in their English garb may be reproduced here:

"In these reminiscences Dr. Wise revealed a side of his versatile self which was known only to those who came into intimate personal contact with him. The geniality and lovableness of the man received expression, for Isaac M. Wise was not only the intrepid fighter, the skillful organizer, the powerful preacher, the incisive writer, but also the kindly gentleman, who knit to himself with bonds of steel those who came within the circle of the influence of his sunny personality. The optimism of his nature has been frequently dwelt upon during these past weeks; but there was also a romantic strain in his make-up which enabled him to forget the realities of life and find recreation in an imaginative world which obtained expression in novel and in drama. This many-sidedness appears in these reminiscences. The joviality and good humor alternate with the discussion of the plans that he had in mind. There appear, too, descriptions of scenes and incidents in American Jewish life that are not contained in books. He tells likewise of the discouragements and the obstacles that were placed in his path. The life portrayed is presented so vividly that the reader lives through with him the days of struggle and achievement. The reminiscences begin with his arrival in this country,

for he dated his life from that time. He rarely referred to his experiences in Europe; the restrictions placed on the Jew in his native land of Bohemia darkened the prospect. For that reason, too, he never cared to return to Europe. Once only he had that thought, and that was at the time of the revolutions of 1848, when freedom seemed to be breathing upon the dried bones of European institutions. He was essentially a lover of freedom, and therefore he was in all things but birth a true American. This fact appears throughout his whole life, and notably in this personal account of his hopes, longings, and aspirations."

The reminiscences stop very abruptly. It was my original purpose to continue the story of Dr. Wise's life from the point at which this autobiographical narrative ceases, and to incorporate it in this volume as an appendix. However, this has been rendered unnecessary, owing to the fact that a biography of Dr. Wise has appeared recently in the volume published under the auspices of the Alumnal Association of the Hebrew Union College, entitled *Selected Writings of Isaac Mayer Wise.*

I have thought it advisable to reproduce in the translation the Hebrew terms and expressions that appear in the original manuscript. I have explained or translated these terms and expressions in a glos-

sary, which the reader to whom they are unfamiliar will find at the end of the volume.

In order to give this volume a rounded form, I have added, as a concluding chapter, the short account of the closing scenes of the life of my friend and whilom teacher, which I wrote for the memorial number of the *American Israelite*, and also a poem, which is in the nature of an appreciation, from the pen of Walter Scott Hurt.

We stand perhaps too near to Dr. Wise and his achievements to be able to view them dispassionately and impartially from the purely objective standpoint. The future historian alone will be able to do this. And that historian, whoever he may be, will be compelled to turn to the present volume as one of the most important sources of information, if not the most important, that we have concerning the remarkable leader who, more than any one man, stamped the impress of his powerful personality upon the institutional religious development of Judaism in America.

In presenting these reminiscences to the public in translated form, I have aimed to conform as far as possible to the original; but my chief object has been to reproduce the spirit of the author. I am convinced that these reminiscences will at once take a high place in American Jewish literature. They are

unique. They constitute a real contribution to the history of the beginnings of modern Judaism in America. The name of Isaac Mayer Wise will live forever in the institutions which he founded—the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College, the Central Conference of American Rabbis; but the man himself speaks for all time in these pages. We hear his voice, his spirit shines through the words. It is his own personal legacy to posterity. As such may it be received on this day of the anniversary of his demise!

DAVID PHILIPSON.

Cincinnati, March 26, 1901.

REMINISCENCES

PART I

II

I

THE twenty-third day of July has no particular significance in the calendar of Christian sects, and according to the Jewish calendar this day in the year 1846 was one of the days of mourning of the month of Ab. It was merely an ordinary hot summer day. Notwithstanding the fact that a rabbinical conference was held in Germany in the year 1846, this year has no special importance in the history of the world. No battles were fought, no revolution was enacted, no epidemic, no flood, no scarcity marks this commonplace year 1846. Dark night still brooded over Austria; no paper constitution stood as yet between king and people in Prussia; Germany still snored beneath the protection of thirty-six monarchs; Nicholas tyrannized over Russia and Poland, and longed to populate Siberia; the pope had not yet begun to anathematize; everything was commonplace, ordinary, and exceedingly dull. On that commonplace twenty-third day of July in that commonplace year 1846, I landed in New York with wife and child and two dollars in my pocket. I had grown heartily weary of Europe, or rather of Austria; had resigned my position in Radnitz, Bohemia, where I had preached and taught for three years; had gone with wife and child to Bremen without a passport, embarked on the sailing vessel Marie, spent sixty-three

tiresome days on the ocean, did what I could for small-pox patients (there being no physician aboard), waited on my sea-sick wife, carried my little child about (now Mrs. Benjamin May, of Cincinnati), ate onions and herring and smoked poor tobacco, railed at the stupidity of my surroundings, and hoped for better times, until finally this twenty-third day of July released me from these ills. I have long since forgotten the romance of that trip, and can recall vividly but one incident, that I impart herewith.

On the twentieth of July the captain informed me that we were about fifty miles out at sea opposite Boston, and that, if the wind continued favorable, we would be in New York erelong. It was late at night when he told me this. I was sitting solitary and alone, and surrendered myself entirely to my emotions. How foolish and daring it is, thought I, to have left home, friends, position, and future prospects in order to emigrate to a strange land without means or expectations! My imagination now played upon the dark and spectral possibilities hidden in the lap of the veiled future. I grew more and more despondent and confused. Finally I dropped off to sleep, and dreamed the following unforgetable dream:

I dreamed that a great storm which drove the ship towards the land had arisen. Every one swayed, trembled, feared, prayed; the inky waves rose mountain high, and broke into seething masses, only to give way to other watery heights. Convulsively I embraced wife and child, and spoke words of calm and comfort. It then appeared to me as though a high, steep, rocky mountain was hurrying toward us and

threatened to crush us. "Here we must land, or we sink," cried the captain, with quaking voice. Scarcely had these words been uttered ere the ribs of the ship, which had been hurled on the rock, cracked. I took a daring leap, and stood on the rock with wife and child. The ocean still roared; a wave seized the ship, and cast it far out into the seething waters; in a few moments it was swallowed up in the night, and disappeared from my gaze. So, then, here we were on a rugged rock; at our feet the waters, agitated by the wild storm, raged; above us and about us were forbidding rocks, while the darkness added its terrors. Finally, after a long interval, morning dawned, and revealed the dangerous situation. "However steep this mountain appears, we must ascend it," said I to my wife. I took my child on one arm; tremblingly my wife clung to the other, and then forward, in God's name! It seemed to me as though an inner voice called, "Up above there is help." With difficulty we clambered from rock to rock, higher and higher, constantly, untiringly. Then, as though the measure of woes was not yet full, hollow-eyed, ghostly, grinning dwarfs, lascivious, ragged goblins, and tiny poodles, with large, hollow, puffed-out heads, came towards us on the narrow path, opposed our further progress, and mocked me mercilessly. I brushed them aside; but for every ten that I pushed away a hundred arose from out the bare rock. They came in the shape of night-owls, and deafened me with their cries; they sizzed about me like angry wasps, and stung me; they placed themselves, like stupid blocks, in my path; in short,

they did everything to harass me and prevent my further progress. My wife at my side wept bitterly, the child in my arms cried for fright, but my courage, strength, and confidence grew. I begged, implored, avoided, circumvented them, all to no avail. Then I marched straight through the crowd of dwarfs, paid no attention to their ravings, dashed them aside to the right and the left, until finally, weary and perspiring, we reached the summit of the mountain. Arriving there, I saw the most beautiful and glorious landscape, the richest, most fertile meadows, but I sank fainting; thereupon I awoke, and found that it was all a dream; but I have often thought of that dream.

Upon my arrival in New York I had much luggage, but little money. A countryman of mine, who had a horse and cart at hand, offered to take my luggage to Essex Street for six dollars. The price seemed to me too high. I spoke with an Irishman, who also had a horse and wagon; he asked two dollars for the same service, and I gave the Irishman the preference over my obliging countryman.

I had to make similar arrangements for my fellow-travelers; this incensed a dozen German drivers against me. "Now this confounded Jew has to know English, and take the morsel of bread out of our mouths," cried one of them threateningly, and the chorus joined in with all possible objurgations against the Jews. I did not swear, but I was exceedingly angry. Aha! thought I, you have left home and kindred in order to get away from the disgusting Judaeophobia, and here the first German greeting that sounds in your ears is hep! hep! True, in my mag-

nanimity I gave no retort to the gruff drivers. I turned my back on them, but I indulged the right of being angry to my heart's content, for I felt that from now on I was no longer an imperial-royal, Bohemian *Schutzjude*, but that I was breathing a free atmosphere, and no one could prevent me from being as angry as I pleased.

My wife and child were taken from the ship to his home in Staten Island by a certain John Lindheim. This Mr. Lindheim had a clothing-store on the Bowery, and my brother-in-law, Edward Bloch, a youth of sixteen, clerked for him. Hence the friendship between the Lindheim family and my own. I could not remain in Lindheim's house, because I was compelled to be the guest of Mr. Joseph Cohn. I had married him six months previously in Radnitz. He was about to emigrate, and in lieu of a fee engaged to have me stop with him on my arrival in New York. The promise was given and kept. Soon, however, we were enabled to move into a house on Broom Street, belonging to Mr. Friedman, where we went to housekeeping.

In 1846, New York was a large village. On Broadway as far up as Canal Street, and in the business section east of Broadway, the beginnings of the metropolis were perceptible, but elsewhere it was like a village. Small, insignificant-looking people went in and out of small houses, small shops, small institutions. The first impression that the city made upon me was exceedingly unfavorable. The whole city appeared to me like a large shop where every one buys or sells, cheats or is cheated. I had never

before seen a city so bare of all art and of every trace of good taste; likewise I had never witnessed anywhere such rushing, hurrying, chasing, running. In addition to this, there was the crying, blowing, clamoring, and other noises of the fishmongers, milkmen, ragpickers, newsboys, dealers in popcorn, etc.—earsplitting noises, which were even often drowned in the rumblings of the wagons and the cries of the street gamins. All this shocked my æsthetic sense beyond expression. In the first five days I heard the sound of music but once in the street; this was produced by a wandering mediocre Bohemian band, which thundered Turkish music. Yet, on the other hand, I heard on the very first day the favorite, and in fact the only dance music known here, played by a negro, who fiddled outrageously and at the same time called the figures of the quadrille in a hoarse voice. Everything seemed so pitifully small and paltry; and I had had so exalted an idea of the land of freedom, that New York seemed to me like a lost station by the sea; on that first day I longed to be away from the city.

I had a still more depressing experience while inspecting a number of houses. At Cohn's I found, in a basement, a number of young fellow-countrymen of culture transformed into factory hands, cigarmakers, and peddlers, who, like a lot of political quidnuncs, uttered absolute and decided opinions about the Mexican War, which was then in progress. These young people asked me to open at once a night-school for instruction in English, and a number of them offered themselves as scholars immediately. I

did as they bade me; but the experiment lasted only one or two weeks, for I discovered that I had poor-paying pupils, and they discovered that they had a still poorer teacher. I had brought many letters with me. Two of them I delivered to the physicians B. and M. They both advised me to have nothing to do with the Jews, although their practice was confined exclusively to Jews, and gave me the fatherly advice either to peddle or to learn a trade. I felt disgusted; but during the conversation I had examined them more carefully than they had had time to examine me, and had come to the conclusion that, however skillful they might be as physicians, they were not clever enough to advise me. That whole day I walked about New York gaping and staring, in order to remove the impression of that interview. In the evening I looked through my letters of introduction, took out one more letter that I intended to deliver; but I determined that it should be the last. In the morning, accordingly, I went to Eldridge Street, stopped at a small house, and rang the bell very timidly. A man in a dressing-gown, with a black velvet cap on his head, opened the door.

"I would like to speak to Dr. Lilienthal."

"I am he; step in."

We stepped into the rear room, which was his library.

"I come from Bohemia. Here is a letter from Dr. W., your school friend, and here are some of my papers."

Dr. Lilienthal read the letter and the first of the twelve documents I had given him, when he went

to the door and called: "Wife, bring coffee and cigars. I have received a guest." Turning to me, he gave me a friendly and hearty *Shalom alekhem*. "Hold up your head! courage!" cried he. "You are the man. We need you." In short, Dr. Lilienthal was the first one to encourage me and inspire me with hope, and at that time this was of prime importance and significance for me. After a few minutes *she* came into the room; *she* whom later I had the frequent opportunity of admiring as the most lovable and amiable of wives and mothers; she who surpassed even Munich's daughters in charm; who with clear insight penetrated into the very heart of conditions and persons, and cast a glamour of love on all about her. I mean the sainted Peppie Lilienthal. Within ten minutes I felt at home, and the impression which I received in the Lilienthal home, perhaps decided my career in America. Here I became acquainted with Jewish conditions and with persons of the better type. The first acquaintances that I made in Lilienthal's house were Judge Joachimson, at that time a young attorney; J. D. Walter, the most prominent merchant among the German Jews of New York; Moritz Lehmeyer, an exceedingly amiable young merchant; Henry Moses, the millionaire of Houston Street, and president of the *Anshe Chesed* congregation; Felsenheld, a teacher; and Kohlmeyer, a rabbinical candidate, both of them good, agreeable men of culture. That very day Joachimson introduced me to Professors Matthew and Turner, and before nightfall my opinion of New York had greatly improved.

In 1846 there were seven Jewish congregations

in New York, two communal schools, a number of Jewish mutual benefit associations, and two charitable societies—one German, the other English. The Portuguese congregation was the oldest, and the oldest Portuguese was a Polish Jew. Since my landlord, Friedman, was a member of this congregation, I went with him to the synagogue on Sabbath *Nach'mu;* but I found the Portuguese ritual just as antiquated and tedious as the German and the Polish, although more decorous, dignified, and classical. The next oldest congregation was the English-Polish, that had a handsome synagogue on Elm Street, and used the Polish ritual as it obtained in London. On the very first morning I visited this synagogue, I longed for the sight of a Hebrew book, and asked the *Shamash* whether I could obtain a volume of the *Mishnah.* That individual laughed so mockingly, that I readily perceived what a sign of "greenness" it was on my part to ask for an ancient Hebrew book in the New World, and that too in an orthodox synagogue. It was certainly not my fault, for I discovered only later the crass ignorance which ruled there. On Center Street, in the second story, was the Polish synagogue. I went there the next evening, and heard some individual sniffle through a bit of *Rashi* in so pitiably ignorant a manner between *Minchah* and *Maarib,* that I never went there again. Of the German congregations three were ultra orthodox. One of them worshiped on Henry, the other two on Attorney Street. Dr. Lilienthal had been chief rabbi of these three congregations for six months, and preached every Saturday in a different synagogue.

On the first Sabbath (it was Sabbath *Chazon*) I went to the synagogue on Henry Street to hear Dr. Lilienthal. The attendance was very large, the service according to the old German ritual. The congregation was orthodox, and just as ill-behaved as in Germany. The cantor had on a Christian gown, trilled like a mock nightingale, and leaped about like a hooked fish. After the selling of the so-called *mitzwoth*, I lost all patience with the intolerable sing-song with which the reader intoned the portion and read from the *Torah* and with the innumerable *Mi-sheberakh*. "Why is this nuisance tolerated in a metropolis?" I asked my neighbor. "I do not know," he answered; "but it takes place in all the synagogues of New York." At last the longed-for event took place. Dr. Lilienthal preached towards the close of the service. He pleased me very much, for he was an excellent and popular pulpit orator, used a glowing diction, and had a dignified carriage; but what he said about the season of mourning had long since lost all significance for me, and I was really and truly moved to mournful feelings, not for the destruction of Jerusalem, but for the disappearance of Judaism in the Polish-cabbalistical rabbinism and supernaturalism.

The youngest congregation was the Emanuel congregation. But very little was known of it in New York. On Sunday, the 10th of Ab (postponed *Tïshah b'ab*), an acquaintance took me to the place where the beginnings of the temple were laid. We entered a small hall, a flight of stairs above the ground. There we found about fifty men and thirty women,

the latter in a section partitioned off. A boys' choir, re-enforced by a few men's voices, and a cantor with a weak tenor voice, sang some compositions of Sulzer as poorly as in a village synagogue; but dignity and decorum ruled—the beginning of a better future—and I breathed easier. Dr. Merzbacher, of blessed memory, preached. There was nothing in his delivery to attract a stranger; but he spoke of the end of the *Galuth*, of the morning that was dawning also for the house of Israel. His words made me feel at home, although he did not treat the *Tishah b'ab* as drastically as I should have wished.

Such was the status of the synagogues of New York in 1846. Outside of Lilienthal and Merzbacher, there was not one leader who could read unpunctuated Hebrew, or, with the exception of a few private individuals whom I shall mention later, had the least knowledge of Judaism, its history and literature. One of the most prominent individuals denied emphatically that *Rashi* had written a commentary to the Book of Samuel, and another, who had just chanced to buy the Vienna edition of the *Yad hachazaqah*, and, after having had it most elegantly bound, had placed it on his parlor table, told me in all seriousness that that book had in fact been written by Moses Maimonides, and then asked me naïvely whether I had ever before seen a copy of this valuable work. I found at that time in New York but three men in private life who possessed any Jewish or any Talmudical learning; viz., Nussbaum, Goldsmith, and Falkenau. The first was usually called *Morenu* Nussbaum, the last named was the son of

a *Dayan* of Fuerth, and Goldsmith was a Dutchman of goodly Talmudical attainments. Besides these, there were Joachimson, senior, and Oettlinger, who possessed some Jewish learning. Otherwise ignorance swayed the scepter, and darkness ruled. As for modern culture, things were little better. No Jew who had recently immigrated was fitted to occupy a public position creditably. Among the Portuguese Jews there was Mordecai Noah, who had achieved prominence through his literary and political activity. Beyond this, nothing worthy of note had been accomplished in that quarter. In the mercantile world, Walter, Dittenhoefer, Moses, and Content were well known; Lehmaier, Seligman, Stettheimer, Bernheimer, were as yet unknown beginners; Belmont, Speier, Ballin, Sanders, and others of the same stripe did not want to pass as Jews even as long ago as that time; Chatham Square was a disgrace; Houston Street was a vanity fair; on the Bowery, on Division, Grand, and other streets there were small stores owned by Jews; but, on the whole, the Jew cut no figure. Thus matters stood in New York in 1846. And when I comprehended the real position of affairs, I understood why the two physicians, B. and M., had advised me to have nothing to do with the Jews. Add to this the fact that I had a good prospect of receiving a professorship at a prominent college, and it will be readily understood that I began to waver in my intentions of pursuing the rabbinical career. I talked the matter over with Joachimson, and he begged me earnestly not to withdraw my energies from Judaism, for the very

reason that it stood in such need of them. Thereupon I resolved firmly to devote myself entirely to Judaism, to rise or to fall with it. I thought of my dream, and took courage.

On the first of July I was introduced to Dr. Merzbacher. After a brief interchange of thoughts, I took a hearty liking to the man, who seemed to me to be thoroughly sincere. He appreciated the higher things, and strove to realize them. After he had narrated to me his sad experiences in New York—he had been the preacher of the German congregations before Lilienthal—he asked me, in a hearty and sympathetic tone, "What do you intend to do here?" There was an accent of great pity and sympathy in the question, and I declared openly that I had determined to remain faithful to my calling. "In case I fail in this, I will enter upon an academic career; and if I should not succeed, I will work. I am young, healthy, active, and have enjoyed a good education." "And you intend to preach reform?" he asked, impressively. "I can sacrifice everything except principle," I answered. "Well, then, I wish you luck," said Merzbacher; "but I can not prophesy success for you." What! *et tu Brute?* I reflected. You who preach reform are doubtful of success? That was a sad blow for me. Later I learned that he received a salary of but two hundred and fifty dollars per year, because the congregation could not afford to pay more. Such were the prospects of the reform movement in New York in 1846.

On the third of July I was introduced to Mr. von Eichthal, the editor of the *Daily and Weekly Express.*

Through him I became acquainted later on with several leaders of the Whig party. He advised me to pursue a literary career, and promised to render me assistance. I had, however, decided to remain faithful to my calling, and did not permit myself to be moved from my purpose. I determined to give private instruction in New York until something better would turn up.

The most pressing question was that of finances. Whence obtain the money that would enable me to wait? My wife's brother, Joseph Bloch, now living in San Francisco, and her cousin, Samuel Glueckauf, at present in Chicago, whose bride we had brought with us from Europe, were young, jolly peddlers, who had little money and many debts. They came to New York, and offered my wife as much money as she wanted. Mr. Friedman, my landlord, informed me that he would not only not press me for the rent, but would also let me have meat on credit; and so he did. Lindheim, Walter, Content, and other newly-made friends also offered me money. All this, however, did not solve the main problem. I began to give private lessons. In this, however, I was interrupted erelong. The Professors M. and T., the rich merchant F., and the ex-Jew N., all of whom I considered honest, cultured men, showed themselves exceedingly gracious and obliging, recommended me highly, and introduced me into good families; but soon they gave me to understand that a few drops of water and a confession of Christianity would open for me the way to all hearts. I retired after I had explained my standpoint to the learned Professor T.

Private instruction was poorly paid among the Jews of New York; but I was content, because my wants were few. I would have continued thus for some time longer, had not the following occurrence taken place:

"Are you a good preacher?" Dr. Lilienthal asked me one day.

"At home they considered me a passable pulpit orator," I answered, not without hesitancy, for I did not want to preach in New York for various reasons, and had already refused several invitations.

"Well, then, go on Thursday to New Haven, in the State of Connecticut," said Dr. Lilienthal. "They have invited me to dedicate a synagogue there. I can not leave New York. Go and do your best."

On the Thursday morning designated, I found myself on the steamer that sailed for New Haven, and I was received very cordially. Leopold Wasserman, of blessed memory, whose poems appeared in the early volumes of the *Deborah*, had seceded from the congregation with several others, had organized a new congregation, and had furnished a hall to be used as a temporary synagogue. This Leopold Wasserman was a noble man; a poetically-gifted idealist, with whom I formed an intimate friendship, which lasted to the end of his life. Blessed be his memory!

I seemed to myself very small and childish in the new synagogue of New Haven. I had never preached in so small a place; but the people treated me very kindly, and I had taken so lively a fancy to the president, Leopold Wasserman, that I spoke as well as I was able. On Saturday afternoon I had to preach

also for the old congregation, and a peddler from Albany who was present complimented me by assuring me that he had heard no better German preacher in Poland, and that if I would come to Albany my fortune would be made. I paid little attention to this, for I had no idea where Albany was. However, when on Sunday evening Mr. Wasserman praised my efforts highly in the name of the congregation, and in testimony thereof handed me sixty dollars, I began to feel elated; for, in the first place, I was so innocent as to believe every word that my courteous friend said in his complimentary address; and, secondly, on the basis of Bohemian coinage the sixty dollars I had received amounted to three hundred gulden. Monday morning I left New Haven in the best of spirits and with my pocket full of money. On board the steamer I became acquainted with the preacher, Mr. Isaacs, of New York. He lectured me, the greenhorn, at length, and in a highly-edifying manner, because, as he had heard, I had said something in New Haven about reform and progress. Happily, I did not understand everything that he said, and what I did understand was unintelligible to me from my standpoint. In the next number of the then only existing Jewish monthly, *The Occident*, a paragraph of somewhat the following tenor appeared: "There has arrived from Germany a young schoolmaster who also preaches, and is said to possess some Hebrew learning." Upon reading this, I thought it was quite stupid in him to have made my arrival the subject of a public notice.

In New Haven I had also formed the acquaintance

of a certain Mr. Robinson, of New York, who wished to take me and my family into his home, and keep us until I had accepted a position. My wife would not consent to it. We took the will for the deed.

Upon my return home, I informed my wife in the most enthusiastic manner how wonderfully I had succeeded. She laughed at me. This was at that time the best medicine for me. She laughed at my glowing satisfaction and childish contentment, because she had too lofty an opinion of her husband.

The next morning I went to Dr. Lilienthal to report. But he knew all that had taken place. He had received a letter from New Haven.

"You can go to Syracuse next week," said he. "There also a synagogue is to be dedicated. They wished me to come; but I have written them that I would send you."

The offer was most welcome to me. I wanted to get away from New York. J. D. Walter, who was present, said he would give me a letter to his brother-in-law, Moses Schloss, who was president of the congregation in Albany, through which place I would have to pass. "If you leave a week earlier, and remain in Albany over Saturday, every one will be pleased to hear you preach. They have heard no preacher for years."

Armed with a letter from Lilienthal to Syracuse, and from Walter to Albany, I boarded on Thursday morning the steamer that went up the Hudson to Albany. I parted very reluctantly from my wife; for she, who fulfilled the wifely ideal of my youthful imagination so completely, and to whom I clung with

my whole heart, had become still dearer to me, now that she had followed me so trustingly and without a word of objection to an utterly strange land, and that, too, though she was the only daughter of well-to-do parents, and was well justified in indulging better prospects. Yet I boarded the steamer with a joyous spirit and a light heart, for my fancy wove for me the picture of a future in the interior of the country. An inexplicable force directed my attention to the interior of America, and I rejoiced at the splendid opportunity before me, for Syracuse seemed to me far distant from New York.

I have seen and experienced quite a great deal in life, but I can recall no impression that can be at all compared with that which I received on that day. The steamer seemed to be a floating palace, the people higher beings, and the Hudson a second Chideqel, flowing out of the Garden of Eden. The lofty walls of rock above New York seemed to shut off the Old World, and the steep heights in the vicinity of West Point were for me the mighty door, the giant gate opening into the New World. Overcome with awe and devotion, I could have embraced every mountain, every rock. Then we reached the broad valley near Rhinebeck. There I awoke from my day-dreams, for there the New World seemed to begin. "All hail, thou great and glorious land!" I cried out, so loud that a Yankee standing by asked me, "You speak French?" I suppose I answered him; but I do not know what I said. Most likely he did not understand me, for he did not disturb me again.

When I began to feel somewhat more prosaic, I saw a man who seemed to be a countryman of mine, walking through the boat anxiously and searchingly.

"Have you lost anything?" I asked.

"Have I lost anything? *Wie heisst? Bewonos*, I have lost everything!" he cried; "I have lost my English language."

"You have lost the English language? I do not understand."

"You do not understand? Neither do I, and therein lies my misfortune. I arrived at New York, and after I had paid all my debts I had twenty dollars and three shillings left. So they said to me, 'Cohen, you must buy a basket for six shillings, and twenty dollars' worth of kuddel muddel, what we call in German *Meshowes*, and then you must go peddling in the country.' I cry out, 'The country speaks English, and I do not. How in the world can I get along?' 'That makes no difference,' they told me; 'we will write everything down for you.' Well, they gave me the basket filled with kuddel muddel, and wrote down for me the English language on a piece of paper, and sent me to Hudson. Now I have lost the English language, and am perfectly helpless."

"If that is all you are in need of, I can help you." With these words I comforted the tortured fellow. He brought some paper. I told him to write down in German the terms of which he required the English equivalent, and translated these words for him. He now had his English language again, although he insisted on pronouncing p for b, f for d, and k for g.

He persisted in saying, "You fant to puy somdink? Can I shtay mit you all nacht?" Correct him as I would, my words fell on deaf ears.

Upon the landing of the steamer at Albany, drivers, dealers, landlords, railroad agents, peddlers, newsboys, crowded about and pulled the "green" passengers hither and thither. All this brought me back to earth from the heights of poesy. Opposite the landing I saw my evening "star" inviting me to rest. Stern's (Star's) hotel, as they had informed me in New York, was situated opposite the landing, and thither I betook myself immediately. Stern sees standing before him a lean, pale young man, with long hair, clad in black, and quite embarrassed. He calls his wife. She comes, receives me in a most friendly manner, and takes me into a room that was supposedly a parlor. She would, of course, have liked to know all about me at once; but I, as usual, spoke very little. My short answers embarrassed the woman, and she sent for Moses Schloss, the Aristotle of Albany Jewry. He came, accompanied by Henry Blattner, the second in the high council. "You are, I presume, the newly-arrived rabbi, and have a letter addressed to me by my brother-in-law Walter," said Schloss. I concluded from this that Walter must have written to him. I delivered my letter, which they both read. After a brief conversation, I was invited to preach on Saturday. It is self-understood that I accepted the invitation. The two gentlemen impressed me favorably. They seemed to be intelligent, cordial, open, and frank. Schloss informed me later that he took me to be quite a *Shlemihl*. Except-

ing these two gentlemen and the peddler whom I had met in New Haven, no one concerned himself about me. On Friday I saw the sights of the city, and in the evening I read undisturbed. Saturday morning Moses Schloss took me to the synagogue on Herkimer Street. It was an old wooden building, with the entrance from the north. The ark was on the east, the *Bimah* in front of the ark, and the benches in four squares on the two sides, so that one-half of the congregation looked northward, and the other half southward. A Mr. Traub sang the old tunes, and the sexton, Levy, sold the *Mitzwoth*, and attended to all the business. There was order and decorum as far as these were possible under existing circumstances. I preached on a text taken from the Scriptural portion of the day; but made no marked impression on the congregation. In the afternoon Schloss said to me: "You preach very well; but you will not do for these people; they did not understand you. Still, if you wish to come to us for the holidays, I promise you a fee of one hundred dollars." I promised to write to him from Syracuse about it, because I had determined to spend the holidays in Cincinnati. I had met a Cincinnatian in New York, who praised Cincinnati to the skies. Although Schloss paid me a respectable sum of money on Sunday, and invited me once again to return for the holidays, which Blattner, Sporberg, and others also did, it was perfectly clear to me that I had failed in Albany. This aggravated and humiliated me. I left the city as early as possible Monday morning, and boarded for the first time an American railroad train in order to travel to Syracuse.

II

THE railroad train, with its splendid long cars, was a great novelty, and diverted me for a little while; but it was not long ere I again succumbed to a feeling of despondency, which not even the fertile and charming Mohawk Valley, with its many beautiful towns, could dissipate. I had a small Pentateuch with two *Targumim* and *Rashi* in my valise. I took it out, hoping thereby to regain my equilibrium. On the same seat with me sat an inquisitive Yankee, who regarded me curiously, and finally asked what sort of a book that was. I told him. Then he inquired in how many languages all this was written. I explained that the text was Hebrew, the two paraphrases two Aramaic dialects, and the commentary rabbinical Hebrew. The fact that I could read so many languages quite took his breath away. When a little later he learned that I had arrived in the country but recently, he said: "Ah, now I know who you are; you are a Jewish bishop." I explained to him that the Jews had no hierarchy; but he drew a New Haven newspaper out of his pocket, and showed me black on white that a Jewish bishop, Wess or Wiss, who had lately arrived from Jerusalem had dedicated the synagogue in New Haven. I remonstrated in vain. He continued to call me bishop, bought lemonade, ice-cream, and everything else that could be procured at the railroad

stations, and treated me in quite a princely manner. It is more than likely that he understood but half of what I said, for my English was decidedly Germanic. We arrived at Syracuse at a late hour. My friendly fellow-passenger accompanied me to a hotel, spoke to the proprietor in my behalf, and then took his leave. Upon looking over the newspaper on the following morning, I found to my astonishment the following notice: "N. traveled yesterday from Albany to this city in company with the Jewish Bishop Wess or Wiss (the pronunciation of the name is uncertain), who has lately arrived from Jerusalem." This was followed by a personal description, and closed with the remark that I spoke excellently at least a dozen languages, including English. I had thus an experience similar to that of Lord Byron. I awoke one morning, and found myself famous. I had no time to be vexed at the untruths, for I had scarcely read the notice when a Yankee approached me, and asked whether I was the Jewish bishop. "I am no bishop." "But a rabbi," said he. Upon my affirming this, he continued: "We here in America have never seen a rabbi, although we have been told that there are several in New York, and the rabbi is certainly also a bishop." Thus I became also a bishop for this individual. He told me that he had become converted to Judaism of his own accord, that he observed the Jewish customs, and had built upon his estate a booth according to the Mosaic command, wherein he held service with his family, and that he visited the synagogue occasionally, especially on the Day of Atonement. This was all literally true, as I learned after-

wards. The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a committee. These gentlemen, who had been delegated by the congregation to call upon me, took me to Gerson's *kosher* hotel, where I spent two weeks. I can recall the name of but one of them, a Mr. Henochsberg. The builder had not finished the synagogue at the promised time, and the dedication had to be postponed one week.

During my stay in Syracuse I learned much of importance, for it was my first opportunity for intimate contact with the people among whom I was to live and work, and I had ample time to observe and study them. It did not take me long to view the salt-works, the Indians, the canal, and the other sights. These were of much less interest to me than the people themselves. I devoted my time to studying and becoming fully acquainted with them. I found there several people of culture, notably a Mr. Stein, a most intelligent man, who explained the situation thoroughly. He was as witty as he was intelligent; he was well read, and understood human nature. We grew acquainted rapidly, and felt a mutual respect for one another. He took charge of me, introduced me to the people, called my attention to their merits and their faults, so that I began to comprehend the lay of the land.

After I had learned the condition of affairs from the friends who called upon me (the people spoke unreservedly), I pondered upon what I had heard when I was left alone. My experiences in New Haven, Albany, and Syracuse were of the most signal importance. These German Jewish immigrants,

mused I, have not lost their love for Judaism under the influence of their new political and social conditions. Hence their desire for organization. They form congregations, build synagogues, and feel a longing for the living word.

"The state of affairs is not so bad as Drs. B. and M. imagine. There are life and energy in this new Judaism, whether now it be conscious or unconscious. The people lack culture; they do not possess a true appreciation of the conditions among which they live. 'T is well. I have found my vocation and my mission." Thus I mused, and I painted the future in golden hues. I had just begun to interpret my wonderful dream when I was called to the dinner-table. That afternoon I formed the acquaintance of Stein, Henochsberg, and other intelligent people, among whom was also the *chazan* Gutman, who had arrived recently from Waldorf.

One afternoon I met on the street a man with a large, old straw hat drawn far over his face. He was clad in a perspired linen coat, and carried two large tin boxes on his shoulders. He had a large clay pipe in his mouth, a pair of golden spectacles on his nose, and dragged himself along with painful effort. I looked at him closely, and recognized my friend Stein. Upon noticing my astonishment, he said, smilingly: "Most of the German and Polish Jews in America look like this, and the rest of them did till a very short time ago." As he was going homeward I accompanied him to his house. A quarter of an hour later he emerged completely meta-

morphosed. He looked genteel again. He informed his wife laughingly that I had met him in his peddler's costume. He now described to me graphically the misery and the drudgery of the peddler's life. Our people in this country, said he, may be divided into the following classes: (1) The basket peddler—he is as yet altogether dumb and homeless; (2) the trunk-carrier, who stammers some little English, and hopes for better times; (3) the pack-carrier, who carries from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds upon his back, and indulges the thought that he will become a business man some day. In addition to these, there is the aristocracy, which may be divided into three classes: (1) The wagon-baron, who peddles through the country with a one or two horse team; (2) the jewelry-count, who carries a stock of watches and jewelry in a small trunk, and is considered a rich man even now; (3) the store-prince, who has a shop, and sells goods in it. At first one is the slave of the basket or the pack; then the lackey of the horse, in order to become finally the servant of the shop.

"But what about the people of intelligence?" asked I. "In America," said he, "a man must be either all head or all back. Those who are all head remain in Europe; those who are in this country must be all back, and forego all intellectual pursuits." "But why?" I asked further. "In order to become rich," said he. "The foreigner must either become rich, or go to the wall; he has no alternative. The end and aim of all striving in this country is to become rich;

everything else is secondary. Home, friends, society, honor, religion, knowledge, yes, even pleasure and enjoyment, are all of slight import compared with this. Money, much money, more money, this it is that moves the mind and controls the activities of the body." He continued in this strain, and drew a picture that was most disagreeable to me. "All spiritual treasures, then, are sacrificed to this chase for material gain," cried I. "If so, then tell me why these people form congregations and build synagogues?"

"O, they do this from inherited habit," rejoined Stein. "This one wishes to become *parnass*, and that one a trustee, in order to be able to give orders and make his importance felt. He saw this at home, and imitates it here. There is no earnestness, no spirit, no idealism in the whole proceeding."

"Let us be satisfied that the outer shell still exists," continued I. "Perhaps we shall be able to fill it again. If this one habit has persisted, it is quite unlikely that all others have disappeared. I intend to revive the good habits that have become weakened."

I held similar conversations with Stein almost daily for two weeks. Although his experience was very discouraging, yet it was most instructive for me. But everywhere in the community I came across life and excitement. Everybody was looking forward joyfully to the dedication of the synagogue. A Mr. Oppenheimer, who had but recently arrived from Europe to live with his children, worked so assiduously and so industriously at the decoration of the new synagogue, that before my departure I left him

a written paper conferring the *chaber* degree upon him. This I never did again.* I went to Niagara for two days with my American Mosaic Jew, in order to see the great wonder of the world, and when I returned to Syracuse I found that quite a number of friends had come to the city in order to be present at the dedication. It appeared to me now that the spirit was not entirely quenched, and that there were still many glowing sparks that could be fanned into flame. I concluded that Stein had not learned to know everybody, and later he confessed this himself. Accordingly, I went to work eagerly.

The dedication took place on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Jewish New-Year in 1846, and was a great and joyous festival for the Jews of Syracuse. Everything passed off well, and the newspapers teemed with praise. All my instructions had been obeyed with one exception; viz., to omit a certain prayer on Sunday morning, called *makhnise rachamim*. I was completely satisfied with Syracuse, and contributed, to the best of my ability, to the success of the celebration and the organization of the congregation. It was now so near to *Rosh Hashanah* that I was compelled to leave for Albany, and take advantage of the offer made me by Moses Schloss. I would rather have gone West; but it was too late. Accordingly, I went to Albany by the evening train. It occurred to me now that I had failed in Albany. In Syracuse I had been more successful; but I had not awakened any enthusiasm, and I was dissatisfied

*These reminiscences were written before the Hebrew Union College opened. From 1879-1899, Dr. Wise conferred this degree every year on the graduates of the Preparatory Department of the College.—[ED.

with myself. "Where lies the fault?" I asked myself. "You certainly do not wish to fail in Albany a second time." I pondered upon what Stein had told me, compared this with my own experiences, and drew a picture of the public. I came to the conclusion that logical and rhetorical addresses were beyond the people, and a special pulpit diction incomprehensible to it. "You will have to speak as though you were teaching school, possibly an upper class; yes, that will be about right." I determined to do this. "Now, as to the contents. What shall I say to the people?" Stein has given me ample material, I mused. I will reprove them for all the faults of which Stein accuses them. There will be undoubtedly many present who will be affected seriously. My resolution was formed. I shall moralize, I shall thunder; it will do no harm. I took some visiting cards out of my pocket, and sketched a half-dozen sermons on texts suitable for the holidays. Upon my arrival at Albany in the morning, I was not only provided with sermons for all the holidays, but I had transformed myself completely to the American pulpit orator of that time. True, I was not yet certain of the success of my plan, for the result still hung in the balance; but I was so thoroughly convinced of its successful outcome that I wrote to my wife: "I shall preach to-morrow in Albany with great success, and prove to you that the same old God watches over us also in America."

My presence in Albany aroused no particular attention; no one concerned himself about me with the exception of the officers of the congregation and two or three others. My landlady, Mrs. Stern, it is true,

formed an exception to this general indifference, for she was much concerned for my well-being (I looked pale and sickly), as well as that of my wife, my child, my mother, and all my near and distant relatives in direct and lateral lines. She spoke much and in a friendly manner, as indeed it is quite necessary for a landlady to do whose better half was capable of speaking but little, that little even being surly and insignificant. She succeeded in entertaining me. I paid no attention to what she said, for entirely different thoughts were agitating me; but when she kept silence (and she did pause occasionally), I recognized the truth of a saying that has not been enunciated clearly enough: "It is indeed good for man to be alone." Her pauses gave spice to her conversation.

A large congregation had assembled in the synagogue in the evening. They listened to the old *Rosh Hashanah* melodies, which appealed none the less strongly to me, and brought back the sounds I had learned to love in my youth. Therefore I did not notice that I was the object of curious attention, and when I did notice this at last, I became so embarrassed that I was happy when the last note of the *Yigdal* sounded, and the people wished one another all that was good. When somewhat later I thought of the faces that I had seen in my audience, I imagined that I was still in Syracuse. Everything passed off well in the morning. There was much speaking and singing, blessing and promising. The *shacharith chazan*, it is true, could not sing well. His breathing was too labored; but he read Hebrew so poorly that he would have been able to conduct

the service successfully in the most orthodox congregation. It is well known that poor Hebrew reading and indecorum were as necessary an accompaniment of Jewish orthodoxy as was dog Latin of Catholic orthodoxy, and the poorest imaginable translation of the Psalms, of Scotch Presbyterianism. And not an iota of this necessary accompaniment could be omitted.

When my turn came I stepped to the improvised pulpit (there were no pulpits in American synagogues in those days, since the congregations gave no thought to employing preachers) with the firm determination to move the hearts of the assembled multitude, and I spoke like an old pastor whose flock threatened to dissolve. Hagar and Ishmael served as symbols for body and soul. I characterized culture and religion as bread and water, and likened the wandering in the wilderness to the course of human life. "And she went and lost her way," was the first knotty point. Here I was able to bring all my weapons into play. I passed in review all the faults and mistakes of all the centuries, and the listening auditory which had never heard such a flood of words was completely overwhelmed and dumfounded. Thereupon followed the second phrase, "And she threw the child under the terebinth." This I applied to the inner remorse of the sinner, and expatiated upon this until the sobbing in the gallery became so audible that I felt compelled to stop. Finally I spoke of the angel and the spring. These I called the voice of conscience and the perennial fount of religion, etc., which unite mother and child at last in comfort and

hope, and lead to a beautiful future. I concluded with an expression of the hoped-for reconciliation and brotherhood of mankind. As I left the pulpit and glanced at the congregation I felt triumphant, for it seemed to me that I had struck the right note this time. At the close of the service the people crowded about me, overwhelmed me with congratulations and compliments, accompanied me as a procession from the synagogue to Stern's hostelry, and well-nigh crushed me beneath the weight of South German Jewish phrases, until Moses Schloss finally took pity on me and carried me home to dinner. Upon arriving there, I was about to breathe easier when the noble housewife, the amiable and kind-hearted Madame Amelia Schloss, came, and thereupon another woman, and still another, and still another, all of whom sang the same tune, which ended with the agreeable cadenza of a fine *yom tob* dinner at two o'clock. Immediately after dinner, Messrs. Minster and Newwitter, the presiding officers of the second Jewish congregation of Albany, came, and requested me to preach in their synagogue on the morrow. Since Schloss agreed to the proposition, I accepted the invitation, and on the following day policemen had to be placed before the doors of the synagogue for fear lest the great mass of people would break down the old house, the synagogue being on the second floor of a building that was not very strong. My fortune was made as far as Albany was concerned, and the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* I dined at Minster's house, which meant much at that time.

Immediately on the afternoon of the first day nu-

merous emissaries came to begin negotiations with me. They wanted me to remain in Albany. Among them was a Pole, Mr. Goldmann, now residing in New Orleans. His action agitated the whole community. He was a Free Mason, and well acquainted with all the celebrities. He was looked upon as a *lamdan*, *qatzin*, and *chasid*, and his word carried great weight. I had had but a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Goldmann, and did not know that he espoused my cause so warmly. There was an antipathy at that time in America to rabbis and preachers in general, just as there was a prejudice against cultured people of any kind, because they were looked upon as unpractical and helpless. The peddler's pack was too heavy for them, work too hard, and their learning profited naught. There was no room in the synagogue for preachers and rabbis. The *chazan* was the Reverend. He was all that was wanted. The congregations desired nothing further. The *chazan* was reader, cantor, and blessed everybody for *chai pasch*, which amounted to 4½ cents. He was teacher, butcher, circumciser, blower, gravedigger, secretary. He wrote the amulets with the names of all the angels and demons on them for women in confinement, read *shiur* for the departed sinners, and played cards or dominoes with the living; in short, he was a *kol-bo*, an encyclopedia, accepted bread, turnips, cabbage, potatoes as a gift, and peddled in case his salary was not sufficient. He was *sui generis*, half priest, half beggar, half oracle, half fool, as the occasion demanded. The congregations were satisfied, and there was no room for preacher or rabbi. Among all the

chazanim whom I learned to know at that time, there was not one who had a common-school education or possessed any Hebrew learning.

The situation in Albany was peculiar. They wanted me in Albany, but not as rabbi. They desired me to preach and teach. The formal request was made on the second day, thus: "Write a petition to the congregation, setting forth that you wish to remain here, preach, and open a school. This evening we have a general meeting, and you will be elected unanimously."

My answer read: "If you wish to elect me, you must elect me as rabbi. That is my province. I will preach and open a school. I leave to you the determination of the amount of salary, because I do not know how much is needed here. I will write no petition. I have never sought a position, and will never do so." To this determination I have remained faithful. I have never sought a position, nor permitted others to do so for me. My conditions were made. I would enter into no negotiations. In the evening I left for New York, as I wished to see my family again. Upon my reaching home in New York the next morning, my landlord, Friedman, came to meet me with beaming countenance. "I congratulate you," said he; "you have been elected unanimously in Albany as rabbi. Your wife has the telegram." I spent the week in New York, and returned to Albany for *Yom Kippur*. My family came to Albany on *chol hammoed*, and we moved into the house, No. 77 Ferry Street.

My position in Albany was not brilliant financially.

My salary was two hundred and fifty dollars a year, and nine dollars for each pupil in my school. Albany was poor. There were four firms; viz., Schloss, Blattner, Cohen, and Sporberg; two grocers, Schmidt and Schwartz, and several mechanics. All the other members of the congregation were peddlers. The yearly congregational dues amounted to six dollars, besides *shnoder* money. There were but few families in Albany that had parlors furnished with carpets, cane-seated chairs, etc. The majority lived in two or three rooms. A silk dress was a rarity among the women. The men smoked three-cent cigars, and drank beer at three cents a glass. They played dominoes for an hour in order to decide who was to pay the six, nine, or twelve cents. Yet, despite this, the congregation furnished my house, plainly it is true, but to their satisfaction, and this sufficed for my wife and myself. I rented a house for two hundred dollars per annum, sub-rented the top story, occupied the second, and utilized the first for school-rooms.

The school opened with seventy-six pupils (very young for the most part), on the day after *Simchath Torah*, in two rooms, in one of which an English teacher taught; in the other I conducted the instruction. By spring I had one hundred and twenty pupils, divided into three classes. I had two assistants. The children were very young, and entirely untaught. Judaism particularly was unknown to them. A wild youngster of about eight years of age, who was quite unmanageable, came home one day laboring under great excitement, and said to his father "Father, that Dutchman of a teacher is a fine sort of a fellow! He

does not even believe in Jesus Christ." The father told me the joke, and laughed heartily about it. In the course of time there went forth from this school a large number of young people, who are now among the noblest women and most prominent men in the land. At that time, however, no one could have dreamed that the young people whom I loved so heartily would ever amount to anything, for the surroundings were not very promising. But the young people soon became my joy, my hope, my pride, my all, and they were singularly attached to me. I became ere long an experienced schoolmaster, and found contentment in the calling. This filled my time better than the weekly sermon, to which I frequently gave no thought till Saturday morning.

The school supported and satisfied me in the sad period between 1846 and 1850, and in the days of bitter struggle it was a place of refuge, where peace, rest, and love encompassed me. I had good teachers to assist me. Some of them are now prominent personages, such as Glouber of California, Bishop Kennedy, and the prolific writer, Madame Cook, who published beautiful literary productions anonymously even at that time. I was happy in my school, for I was undisturbed there. The school system was very poor in America in those days, and the number of my pupils was limited only by the space at my disposal. Accordingly, I was not an object of compassion in spite of my small salary, which, however, had been raised to four hundred dollars in the following spring. My wife and I lived contented and happy in the new home, and were surrounded soon by a goodly number of friends.

III

WE idealists are perfect builders so long as only air-castles are to be erected. We paint in Chinese fashion without shade or shadow, and, like the pious man in the fable, we build palaces over night. We imagine everything to be charming and easy of accomplishment. Because we wish the good, we believe that everything is good which we wish, and that all men wish the good. But when it comes to prosaic and actual building, and reality with all its hideous grimaces comes upon the scene, our courage fails; we are disillusionized, our dreams fade, and many of us retire even before the battle begins, and bind up our imaginary wounds. This was almost my fate in Albany. I need not say that as idealist, dreamer, and enthusiast I had shaped all things as they ought to have been. The world appeared to me most excellent, just as I wished it to be. The reforming spirit was innate in me; it was my foremost characteristic. In addition to this, I was an enthusiast on the subjects of America and freedom, and was convinced that every one thought and felt just as I did. Consequently I could begin at once to reform and to improve the world. I vented my views awkwardly and unreservedly. After I had spoken in public a number of times, and the auditors did not praise me nor sing hallelujah, I began to de-

spair, and to entertain seriously the thought of retiring from the pulpit. Whereas, I was too dreamy and too impractical to understand, and to take the world as it was. I imagined that the people did not comprehend the nobler things. I began to grow disheartened after I had delivered a few sermons. I was aroused out of this lethargic condition by the following circumstance:

Dr. Lilienthal had taken the initiative towards founding an institute that was to be of vital import for American Judaism. He had formed the idea of founding a synagogal authoritative body, a sort of consistory, that was to go by the old Jewish name of *Beth Din*. The three chosen ones—Wise, Felsenheld, and Kohlmeyer—were consecrated as the American *Beth Din* by Dr. Lilienthal in a powerful address on a Sabbath morning during divine service. He himself was to be the head of the *Beth Din*. Although the name did not please me altogether, still I acquiesced, because I felt that only good could result from the earnest co-operation of the men named. The work to be done was apportioned at the first session on Sunday. Lilienthal was to prepare a history for Jewish schools, Felsenheld a cathechism, Kohlmeyer a Hebrew Grammar, and Wise a *Minhag America*. The Beth Din was to reassemble in the spring of 1847, immediately after Passover, and each one was to have his work ready. I began to comprehend, through the medium of interchange of views with my colleagues, that reform could be accomplished only by introducing reforms; that is, that the act must accompany the spoken word, because the general run of

people understand the act better than the clearest word. Furthermore, Dr. Lilienthal had ordered from Vienna a copy of Sulzer's *Shir Tziyon;* but his mighty *Parnass* declared obstinately that he opposed once and for all its introduction into the chief synagogue. I listened to the bitter war of words, and put an end to it by buying the *Shir Tziyon* and taking it home with me.

I have used the expression, "Mighty *Parnass,*" and I claim that it is not an exaggerated term. At that time the *parnass* was an autocrat in the congregation. He was president, *shamash, chazan,* rabbi. He ruled the quick and the dead. He was the law and the revelation, the lord and the glory, the majesty and the spiritual guardian of the congregation. He suffered no rival; all were subject to him. This was an inheritance from olden times, brought to these shores from the small European congregations.

A correct conception of the power and autocracy of the *parnass* in those days can be formed from the following occurrence: Isaac Leeser, who was the *lumen mundi* of American Jewry at that time, was not permitted to preach in his own synagogue without the permission of the *parnass,* because he had been elected *chazan* and not *chakham* of the Portuguese congregation, and in truth there was once quite an uproar because Leeser preached without such permission. I formed the acquaintance of a number of autocrats of this ilk. Their demeanor was astonishingly pompous and ridiculous. These people were serious obstacles in the path of progress, because as a usual thing they were very ignorant and narrow-

minded. The eagerness to become *parnass* was the fundamental cause of the multiplication of congregations in the cities.

I was spared this annoyance in Albany. Moses Schloss and I were too young to be domineering, and we soon became too close friends to put any obstacle into one another's way. The second *parnass* was and is a thoroughly good man, who was always with us, and the remaining members of the directory, of whom I can recall but two at present—viz., Joseph Sporberg and Abraham Westheimer, of blessed memory—were not less well-disposed and friendly. We were all of about one age and one way of thinking, and agreed readily among ourselves. We had already come to the conclusion that a resolution calling for an appropriation for the purpose of forming and training a choir should be presented at the general meeting of the congregation on *Chanukkah*. When I, provided with a copy of Sulzer's *Shir Tziyon*, of which there were possibly but two copies in America, returned from New York, I began to idealize in a reforming and world-improving way. The congregation voted fifty dollars for a temporary music teacher at the general meeting, and I heard in my imagination organ, orchestra, and brilliant oratorios resound in the synagogue, in place of the antiquated sing song. German music! who will not listen enchanted? Sulzer's songs! who will not worship?

The great violinist Topp was engaged the very next day at fifty cents an hour, and the voices were tried one after the other. But, perfidious fortune! in all of Albany there was not one person who could

sing, with the exception of two bassos; and since no choir could be formed out of two bassos, I was put on my mettle. The two bassos were Lewis Beckel, at present in New York, and Albert Traub, at present in West Virginia. I determined that the school children would have to sing soprano and alto, and so the older boys and girls received musical instruction three times a week. It proved a difficult task; but it succeeded. The choir was ready in a few months, even before *Pesach*, and sang for the first time on a Friday evening. The whole community was in a state of feverish excitement; men, women, and children flocked to the synagogue; yes, the choir sang; but, I pray you, do not ask how. It made no difference to our *chazan* whether he began or ended a few notes lower or higher; he passed with surprising ease from one key to another, and the choir was expected to keep pace with him. The shipwrecked notes were mixed up fearfully and wonderfully, until finally every one sang *ad libitum*, and stopped only when the text was finished. However, there had been singing; there was a choir, and every one took for granted that the singing would improve. Albany was inspired musically. Now the serious question arose as to what was to be done with all the prayers, since the music and the sermon took up so much of the time. We held a *post mortem* examination on the *piutum*, *qinnoth* and *s'lichoth*. My answer to the question put me by the directory on this subject was: Since the authors of those different liturgical pieces were all alike holy and learned, I do not feel justified in discriminating among them. I there-

fore recommend that all these liturgical selections be dispensed with. This recommendation was concurred in at the next congregational meeting in reference to all the services, excepting those of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

Poor as the choir was, it still was the immediate cause of our getting rid of all the mediæval rubbish at once. In this manner synagogal reform began in 1847. True, there was opposition; but the opposition was outvoted, although it was impossible to silence it. Thus, *c. g.*, we had in our midst a pious *Ashkenaz*, who had seen many old customs in Germany. When it was resolved that the congregation should seat itself during the reading from the *Torah*, this man, whose name was Moses, made a point of standing, and that, too, close by the seat of the *parnass*. Thereupon the following intermezzo ensued:

Parnass.—"Moses, sit down."

Moses.—"Hem!" (he was not permitted to speak).

Parnass.—"Moses, sit down, or you will be punished."

Moses.—"Hem!!!"

Parnass.—"Moses, you are fined four shillings."

Moses (astounded).—"*Shmad mich gleich wenn man beim Leienen sitzen muss.*" *

But he sat down, for a fine of four shillings was a rather strong dose for him. The selling of the so-called *Mitzvoth* and the calling to the *Torah* were replaced by tickets, and the *Misheberakh* were reduced to two, despite all opposition.

*I might just as well be converted at once as to remain seated during the reading from the Torah.

I had worked very hard that winter. I had taught six hours daily in the school. I had given instruction in singing three hours weekly. Besides this, I read English two hours every day, and listened to two English sermons every Sunday. Despite all this, I worked industriously at the task allotted to me by the *Beth Din*, so that my plan for a *Minhag America* was ready in the spring of 1847. I went to New York either shortly before or shortly after *Pesach*. I had my manuscript in my valise; but the *Beth Din* was no more. My colleagues had done nothing. Kohlmeyer went to New Orleans, and the plans came to naught. I was alone once again, and I regretted it exceedingly. I complained to Merzbacher; but he could not be interested in any undertaking outside of his own congregation. Mr. Von Eichthal, who was familiar with American conditions, advised me to pursue practical aims, other friends advised me to the same effect, and I returned to Albany, discouraged and despondent. It never occurred to me to prepare a prayer-book for my own congregation, because I considered such an autocratic proceeding wrong, and I am still of the same opinion. I did not wish to sever the bond of synagogal unity.

After I arrived home I embodied my plan in two English lectures, which I delivered to a modest circle of friends, because I did not wish to submit them to the congregation. But fate decided otherwise. One of the friends asked me for the manuscript. I gave it to him, thinking that he wished to read it. He, however, sent the whole thing to Isaac Leeser. Before I had given any further thought to the manu-

script, I saw it, to my astonishment, published *verbatim et literatim* in the *Occident*, accompanied by long notes from the pen of the highly incensed editor. In addition to this, I was called to account for having introduced a mixed choir into the synagogue. Thus I was brought into the public eye *nolens volens*, charged with a dozen stinging accusations. An hour later I received a letter from an old school friend who was living in Philadelphia. He frightened me. He imagined that Leeser, the only representative of the Jewish press in America, was all-powerful; that he would soon vanquish me, and drive me from the field. I looked at my wife and child, and hesitated, but only for a few minutes. Then I wrote a very drastic letter to Leeser.

"Aha! they want to drive me from the field," mused I as I made ready to write to Leeser. "That will prove rather difficult; for in the first place I do not fight, and, secondly, I am not in the field." The introduction to my letter to Leeser consisted naturally of high-flown phrases about the spirit of the age, the irresistible power of progress, the development of Judaism, the unconquerable influences of freedom, etc., all of which must have been extremely tedious and incomprehensible to Leeser. Coming to the subject-matter, I referred to my authorities, cited nine of them, and treated the matter in as strictly rabbinic-casuistical a manner as though we lived in the heart of Poland. I wrote in an exceedingly pedantic and excited strain, and in conclusion mounted the high horse of pathos, and asked Leeser how it happened that of all the Jews who had emi-

grated to these shores between 1620 and 1829 there were not two hundred families left that belonged to congregations, while the great majority had disappeared among the masses. Leeser never answered this question, and the orthodox party owes me the answer still. Thousands of Jews had emigrated from Holland, England, Germany, and Poland during these two centuries. Traces of them are clearly recognizable in hundreds of Christian families; but scarcely two hundred families of their number are to be found within the pale of Judaism.

Leeser's answer to my letter was cold, decided, and frank. He looked upon progress in Judaism as unjustifiable; reform he considered to be destruction, the German rabbis innovators, desirous of tearing down. As for my references to authorities, he informed me that he did not read unpunctuated Hebrew, and besides he cared but little what different rabbis may have written, for his Judaism was laid down in the Bible, the prayer-book, and general custom. No one has the right to oppose these. He said that I would have to retrace my steps, or else Judaism would leave me in the lurch.

Upon perusing this letter, I grew very angry at the thought that a man who could not read unpunctuated Hebrew presumed to direct Jewish affairs in the rôle of editor and guardian. I intended to write him this in plain, unvarnished terms. I did not know America as yet; but I thought it a pity to waste the paper, since it was impossible to effect any change. I was very "green." I have become accustomed to much worse by this time, and I do not lose my tem-

per any more because thereof. Among all the editors of American Jewish papers of my acquaintance, there is not one who possesses Hebrew learning, and yet they manage to get along; but, I pray you, ask not how?

Leeser's letter taught me a sound lesson. I recognized what might be accomplished in America if one had a healthy body, a cheerful disposition, and the desire and capacity for work. This thought spurred me on to study English style during the summer. Chief-Justice Wood and Professor Amos Dean, two celebrated men, the latter the well-known and prominent pupil of Daniel Webster, volunteered to teach me English rhetoric and criticism during that summer. Perhaps I ought to explain how I became acquainted with these gentlemen.

I spent the hours which I devoted almost daily to reading English, either in the State Library or in the library of the Young Men's Association, because these afforded me the best opportunities. Three personages were prominent in the State Library: the poet Streeter, who was librarian; Chief-Justice Wood, who refused to accept any office for five years, and read theological works in order to prove to the priests that they are deceived deceivers, as he put it; and the well-known eccentric Theophilus Wood, who had been the first to enter and the last to leave the library for the past fifteen years. This Theophilus Wood was a lawyer who had been deceived by a fellow-lawyer, by a colonel in whose regiment he had served as lieutenant, and by his sweetheart before he had passed his twenty-fifth year.

When he was thirty years of age an old aunt died, who left him a fortune that yielded him a yearly income of from two to three thousand dollars. He gave up his practice, occupied two rooms in the third story of a hotel, and made the State Library his only home. At the time that I formed his acquaintance he was the living catalogue of the library, Streeter was æstheticism personified, and Chief-Justice Wood was a clear analytical thinker, skeptical, sarcastic, and pessimistic. This peculiar trio soon accepted me as a fourth into their company. I must mention also my neighbors. The Methodist preacher, Sanford, lived on one side. His wife, a well-known bluestocking, knew a little Hebrew, specimens of which knowledge I was compelled to listen to patiently every week. The two Hazens, father and son, lived on the other side. The former was a Campbellite preacher, the latter the publisher of a temperance paper. Sanford and the elder Hazen addressed me in unctuous conversionist speeches, until they recognized that I was a hopeless case. Thereupon we became good friends, and left one another unconverted. The younger Hazen and the whole literary family considered me quite a scholar. I was not only the first Jew, but the first German with whom they had ever held social intercourse. The younger Hazen was a pupil of Professor Amos Dean, and insisted upon my becoming acquainted with his teacher. The latter, who was about forty years old, had written a work on psychology in his twentieth year. This had appeared in Boston, had proven a failure, and had been read by but few people, of whom, however, I was one. He

was well-known as a lawyer and a scholar at that time. It was only later that he became Professor of Criminal Law. Dean, an exceedingly cordial man, treated me like a brother. I was thus enabled to select my teachers when I made up my mind to study English style. My choice fell, as I have said, upon Chief-Justice Wood and Professor Dean. Instead of reading, I now spent two hours daily with these gentlemen. It was not long ere I had the opportunity of putting my studies into practice.

The building on Pearl Street, at present the *Anshe Emeth* Temple, was a Baptist Church. The congregation had engaged recently a young preacher who devoted his two sermons every Sunday to hostile and fanatical attacks on the Jews and Judaism, although he knew both only by name. When I learned of this I wrote him a few lines in the presence of my two clerical neighbors, in which I bade him choose other and better subjects for his sermons. This had no effect. On the contrary, he grew more violent, despite the fact that my neighbors remonstrated with him. I wrote him another letter the following week. I dated it from the State Library, and left a copy of it with the two Woods and Streeter. I informed him of this fact, and had one of the teachers of my school deliver him the letter. "They are infidels," said he, in reference to the Woods and Streeter. "I have even less regard for them." He went even further the following Sunday, although members of his congregation were displeased. The two letters, attested by the witnesses, appeared in the evening paper of the following Monday. The letters were accompanied

by a public demand that the denunciations cease; but it was all to no avail. He could not be brought to his senses. The following notice appeared in all the papers the following week: "Three lectures on the Messiah, with reference to the sermons of Rev. Mr. N., by the rabbi of the *Bethel* congregation. The public, especially the congregation and its pastor, are invited." On the evening in question the synagogue was crowded to the doors by Jews and Christians. In truth, this was the case on all three occasions. The fanatical little preacher had to leave his congregation and the city ten days later. His intolerant and hostile proceeding had outraged the intelligent people of the city to such a degree that he could no longer remain in Albany. Strange to say, that very church was transformed into the Jewish temple three years later. Isaac Leeser, who had published several sharp notices about the schoolmaster in Albany who preached occasionally, wrote me a conciliatory letter, and asked me for the three addresses. I sent them to him, as I had nothing to conceal. The first of the three addresses appeared in the next number of the *Occident*; but even the gods fight in vain against stupidity. Instead of supporting me vigorously in my controversy with a malicious opponent of Judaism, Leeser attacked me most bitterly; accused me of heresy, because, like Crescas and Albo, I rejected the dogma of the personal Messiah, and because I explained the respective Biblical passages differently. Upon reading this, I thought I must leap out of my skin. I wrote a terrible letter to Leeser; but I threw it into the fire. "No, no," soliloquized I, "you may

not declare war as long as you are still making preparations." I wrote him simply that I had not given him permission to publish my lectures, and asked him to return the manuscript, which he did.

All these events convinced me that I would not be able to withhold myself long from public and decisive combat; therefore, I made active preparations to provide myself with all the necessary material. I slept little, read much, spoke only when I had to, and wrote nothing, not even a sermon, although I preached at every public service, which no other preacher except Dr. Lilienthal did. Leeser had introduced me to the American Jewish public. Every reader knew where and how to find me. My opinions had not been kept secret. I had many opponents in my congregation, for reasons that I shall divulge later. The *Occident* furnished these enemies with ever fresh material, and a storm was brewing whereof I had no inkling. Living in an ideal world, almost completely removed from practical life, I not only did not appreciate the power of my enemies; nay, I did not even know them. The school, my studies, my vocation, my family, my friends, these were my all in all. Beyond these I desired nothing, looked for nothing, and found nothing. Whatever lay outside of this circle did not exist for me. Ambition, greed, plans for the future, were strange to me. I prepared for the public combat, which, as I believed, was not to be avoided. I lived in happy ignorance of what was before me.

In December, 1847, an occurrence took place which gave me an opportunity of putting my English

studies to practical use. The conversionist craze of American orthodox Christianity is well known. It was more acute here at that time than even in England or Prussia. The English Society for the Conversion of the Jews had its agents in all parts of this country, and was supported by a number of American organizations and by every Protestant clergyman. Every pious member of the Church, man or woman, was a missionary. The pursuit of souls, although unsuccessful, was yet humiliating for the Jews and Judaism. It was particularly distasteful to me, because the plan of campaign of those pietists consisted chiefly in arousing and fomenting a sentiment of pity for the poor, persecuted, and blinded Jews. They had to employ these tactics because the old weapons of hatred and persecution of the Jews could not be employed here, owing to the free government and the tolerant spirit which was prevalent. The Jew was powerless in the face of such procedure. In Europe, where he was oppressed by inimical legislation, exposed to popular hatred, and held down by press-laws, excepting in England, France, and Holland, he was unable to oppose the conversionists with their own weapons. He was compelled to appear continually in the guise of modesty, humility, and frequently hypocrisy. In America he lacked the power of expression; he was unable to use the spoken or written word. Diaz, Newman, and others entered the lists later, but mostly in the same way as did the Portuguese Jews against Voltaire. They started from outgrown standpoints, so that of all that polemical literature, only Diaz's letters, and the letters of an anonymous writer

in England, have survived to this day. I have preserved also Newman's Dialogues, although they, too, have grown quite antiquated. I shall return to this subject later. I will now relate a special incident.

There was in Albany a tall, thin, smoothly-shaven, quite ignorant, very pious city missionary, whom we four of the State Library drove into such narrow straits occasionally, that he became a quite well-behaved gentleman. He devoted his attention exclusively to sailors, corner-loafers, ne'er-do-wells, and rowdies, and let the remaining non-Christians, including the Jews, roam about unconverted. A German Methodist preacher, who had been a shoemaker, took up the conversion business also, but without success. His occupation was with feet; when it came to heads, he was unable to accomplish anything. He retired humbled from the field. A long-necked, narrow-chested schoolmistress furnished us with tracts and other pietistic writings, until she learned to her sorrow that the Jews read no English, and used the sacred tracts for wrapping-paper. She took to the business of prophesying later; but did not become as celebrated as Tennie C. Clafflin. Thus the missionaries left us in peace. Dr. Kipp, the present Bishop of San Francisco, declared in a sermon that the Jews of Albany were not real Jews; that they were Germans who called themselves Jews for business purposes. He proved this assertion from the fact of the impossibility of converting them to Christianity. Dr. Kipp was never guilty of being logical, and became in truth a bishop of the Episcopalian

Church before he was quite thirty-five, although I taught him Hebrew.

Thus far everything proceeded well in this field. One day a prominent Christian woman asked me with ill-concealed mockery, "Will you speak to-night at the great meeting?"

"At which meeting, madam?"

"In Dr. Wykoff's church," said she, smiling maliciously; "here is the notice in the *Argus*." She showed me the invitation, printed in the newspaper mentioned:

"The Rev. Rabbi Cohn, from Jerusalem, a missionary of the London Society for the improvement of the condition of the Jews, will speak this evening in Dr. Wykoff's church, with the purpose of forming a branch organization for this holy and humane work. The lower floor will be reserved exclusively for the clergy, the Church officers, and their ladies. The general public will be accommodated with seats in the gallery." This was the notice. I read it, and said to the lady, "Yes, I shall speak." "And I shall listen," said she; "and my husband also." This man was the future Senator Harris.

I went home, donned my frock coat, let my wife put collar and white neckerchief on me to her great surprise, and at seven o'clock promptly I stood at the entrance of the church. The sexton wished to prevent my entering the lower floor. "Are you a Protestant clergyman?" he asked. "I am a clergyman, you know that full well, who protests against you all; consequently I am a protestant clergyman,"

I answered, and before he knew it I had entered the lower floor. He was compelled to leave me undisturbed, or else to have me removed by the police. He wisely chose the former alternative. I took a seat near the pulpit, and when the two Unitarian and the Universalist ministers entered, we came to the understanding that they would second anything that I would propose, and I, for my part, promised the same. The pious men and women came in large numbers. They eyed us askance. The church was entirely filled. Dr. Wykoff, in company with other prominent personages, entered at eight o'clock. A little, dark, well-fed man, with small, black eyes and a suspiciously large nose, walked in with them. The proceedings opened with prayer and song. Thereupon some one arose and moved that the meeting organize itself, with Dr. Wykoff as chairman. This was carried. Wykoff now noticed me sitting opposite the pulpit. He had to explain the object of the meeting. He coughs and stammers, and somehow or other he can not do it successfully, for he and I were friends. At last, however, the words were out, and the unfortunate Jew was spoken of pityingly in the usual stock phrases. He finished and said, "Does any one wish to speak on the subject?" The intention was to introduce the missionary at this point, who was to speak his piece; but I anticipated him. "I ask for the floor, Mr. Chairman." Wykoff made a wry face; but he could not refuse me the floor. Nor did I wait for his decision, but began to speak at once. It was the first time that the voice of a Jew had been heard on this question, and I could count with assur-

ance on the undivided attention of the public. I surrendered myself completely to my emotions. I analyzed the subject thoroughly from the moral standpoint. I chastised the covetous affectation and the hypocritical sympathy of piety with all the powers at my command. I refused determinedly, in the name of the Jews, all monetary support, because we ourselves provide for our poor, our widows, and orphans, etc., and rear our children. There are no rowdies, street-walkers, and gamblers among us. We need no help, and accept none. I had determined to treat the subject also from the theological standpoint; but the repeated applause from the gallery convinced me that this was not necessary. I contented myself with stating that I was prepared to prove that the Jew could be converted to Christianity neither by gold nor cunning, neither by persecution nor force, but that I considered it unnecessary to do so at any length at present. I then moved that the meeting adjourn *sine die*. The Unitarian minister arose with solemn mien, and seconded my motion.

The chairman could not do otherwise than put the motion, "All those in favor of adjournment will say aye." A rousing aye thundered from the gallery. "All those opposed will say no." Outside of a few women, no one had the courage to say no. The men recognized how the public in the gallery felt. Wykoff, happy to be released from his uncomfortable predicament, declared the meeting adjourned. The play was over, the audience went home, their faces a yard long. No similar meeting ever again took place in Albany, and whenever a mission-

ary did come to town, Dr. Wykoff brought him to me, that I might explain matters to him. Then he sent him away in peace. My neighbor, Sanford, did the same. He brought every Methodist missionary to my house; but warned them all not to speak with me about religion.

This Cohn remained in Albany a while, and later on came again. He was harmless, and never attempted to convert the Jews. Another missionary by the name of Bloch appeared some time after this. He, however, began too soon to speculate in watches and to play cards with the Jews to give us any trouble.

This occurrence aroused very little attention among the Jews, because they gave but little thought to the missionaries, and did not care to be brought into public notice; but it aroused all the more public attention among the Christians, and especially the clergy. My Jewish opponents exploited the incident to my disadvantage. "He makes *Rishuth*, he attacks even the *Goy*, he can leave none in peace." These words were repeated from mouth to mouth. They were not spoken to me, but to my friends, with the object of teasing and grieving them. True, I heard these things also; but I imagined that these people really did not understand the matter aright.

Among the many missionaries whom I have met, the converted Jews were rascals without exception. To my regret, many of these returned later to the Jewish fold. The Christian missionaries themselves I found occasionally companionable and well-meaning. One evening Sanford brought to my house a

backwoodsman and his wife, and introduced them as missionaries. Mrs. Sanford told me in Hebrew as well as she could, that the strangers were very ignorant, and that I should treat them indulgently. The guests folded their hands reverently, because they thought the Hebrew words were a Biblical sentence bidding them welcome. The good man said that the real reason for his coming was to see me, because he had never seen a Jew. True, Brother Sanford had told him not to speak with me on religion; but it was his duty to speak in the name of the Lord. With that he let his conversion batteries loose. I chanced to have Oken's Manual of Natural Philosophy lying on my table. I began to read to him Oken's five paragraphs on sin as an introduction to the discussion of the false theories of sin. I was reading the passage, "The knowledge of nature is the only means whereby to reach a true knowledge of God and of reconciliation with him," when the good man interrupted me with the emphatic exclamation: "Heaven be praised! I have never read any book but the Bible!" I placed before him both books, the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament, with the words: "'T is well, here is the Bible. Pray, show me what you may have to object to my Judaism." He confessed that he could read neither the one nor the other, and I attempted to show him how he had learned to know the Bible from the unreliable source of a translation, and that, therefore, he must not discuss Biblical questions with me. The man was embarrassed. Mrs. Sanford came to his assistance with the remark that the guests had never

seen a Jewess; would I not please call my wife? I understood the hint, and acted upon it. Upon meeting my wife, the woman arose, folded her hands, and spoke a long prayer of thanksgiving for having lived to see a daughter of Israel. The simple, trusting piety of this woman moved me deeply, and gave me an insight into the American conception of the Jews. The guests knelt, prayed for us, asked God to convert us, blessed us, and bade us a most cordial farewell. Mrs. Sanford told us the following morning that her guests had spoken much of our graciousness and culture. She described the incident in the missionary organ under the heading, "Charitable Opponents," omitting, however, all names. Young Hazen reprinted the article in his temperance paper, and added a very complimentary notice. My opponents exploited this occurrence also to my hurt, and declared that if at any time I would have to cease preaching to the Jews, I would in all likelihood find the opportunity to do so to the Christians.

IV

IT became apparent enough before long that I had warm, enthusiastic, and constant friends in Albany, the like of whom but few men possessed. It was, however, inevitable, and to be expected, that I should have also bitter and irreconcilable opponents, and later on spiteful and vindictive foes. Two-thirds of all the Israelites of Albany and of America before 1848 were uneducated and uncultured. Their Judaism consisted in a number of inherited customs and observances. The less these were understood, the holier were they considered. Every one made things as easy and as convenient as possible in practice. People did not observe the Sabbath. They ate *t'refah* away from home, and did not lay *t'fillin;* but at home and in the synagogue everything had to be conducted in the most orthodox fashion; *i. e.*, in the manner in which every one had seen it in his early home. However, the people came from all lands. Every one had his own *minhagim*, and every one wanted to have these *minhagim* observed generally. Hence arose a Babel-like confusion. Blows passed in a certain synagogue in New York on *kol nidre* evening, because the one party insisted that at the close of the service the *adon olam* be sung first, and then the *yigdal*, while the other insisted on the opposite. Rudeness goes hand in hand with ignorance. A fight at the congrega-

tional meeting, the escape of the *parnass* by a window in order to avoid threatened danger, lengthy and unprofitable altercations in place of debates—such things were not rare, not particularly in Albany, but everywhere. Besides all this, there was also prevalent the notion of the *m'shubed;* the rabbi, preacher, cantor, sexton, servant, man of all work, coachman, etc., were engaged and paid by the year or for six months. It was self-understood that he had to be servant and lickspittle, buffoon and menial, or else he was chased away. Now, I came among these people with a consciousness of independence and mastery which never deserts me, and with ideas on religion and political and social conditions so radically different from theirs, that struggle and ill-feeling were bound to ensue. True, I might have acted more skillfully and discreetly; but being by nature fiery, earnest, and fearless, I gave expression recklessly to all my principles and views, for which the majority of my hearers could, by no possible manner of means, have been ripe and ready. In addition to this, I had the peculiarity of pointing out vices, faults, and weaknesses so sharply and vividly, that in every sermon some one felt that he had been attacked, and harbored ill-will towards me for a long while on that account. Old conditions had to be overcome, and new ones had to be created; antiquated abuses had to be corrected; old, running wounds had to be cauterized; the cry of pain followed of necessity. Opponents and foes were inevitable. I have never harbored resentment towards them on this account. It was not malice, but ignorance and misguided zeal for false

conceptions, that actuated them; yet there was always a religious sentiment at the root of it all.

The following special particulars re-enforced the general objections in the course of time. I commenced at the very start the fight for the observance of the Sabbath. I insisted that one could not be a Jew unless he kept the Ten Commandments. My friends came to my assistance. Schloss, Blattner, Cohn, Sporberg, Beckel, Schwarz, Oppenheimer, Schmidt, and others closed their stores on the Sabbath-day. Many peddlers promised to rest on the Sabbath, and did so, so that the Sabbath was observed as strictly in the *Bethel* congregation in Albany as in Wilna and Brody. I believed at that time that I had re-established Judaism through the school, the Sabbath, and the reforms which had been inaugurated. My opponents, notably the members of the other and very orthodox congregation, thought otherwise. They teased my people, and called them obedient priest-ridden servants; denounced me as a bigoted zealot on the one hand, and as a hypocrite on the other, so that even my zeal for the Sabbath raised a number of opponents against me. A strange state of affairs existed. The reformed Jews of Albany observed the Sabbath and sent their children to the religious school, while the orthodox mocked at both these things. This made them very despicable in my sight, and, because I did not keep silent about it, my opponents became all the more bitter.

The German element of Albany had its seat in the lodges and the saloons, because there were no other social gathering-places. Everything was decided

upon there. I consented to become an Odd Fellow as early as 1847, although the feature of secrecy was repugnant to me. I even organized a new lodge (Mt. Carmel) upon request, and went through all the offices; but I did not enter saloon politics. I could not drink the unwholesome three-cent beer; I could not endure the card-playing and the spitting; I could not stand being treated by every loafer; and I could not listen to the pointless conversation. I remained at home, drank water, and still more coffee; consequently all the saloon-keepers were my enemies, and they were the political ring-leaders. Dr. Bodenstab, the only German physician in Albany at the time, called my attention to the matter; but I could not conquer my repugnance. Further, there arose the unfortunate occurrence that several poor women complained of their husbands to me, because these sat in the saloons and played cards, instead of providing for their families. I sent for some of these worthies, remonstrated with them in the kindliest manner; but to no avail. They answered me shamelessly, and one of them told me quite plainly to mind my own business; that he was no priest-ridden slave. As a result, I denounced drinking, card-playing, the saloon life, and idleness which was neglectful of duty, from the pulpit with all my might. I did this, not moderately and tactfully, but unsparingly. I chastised without reserve. I was irritated, and regardless of consequences. As a result, the orthodox element received recruits, and the number of my opponents increased. Another class of opponents arose in the course of time. It is well-known that American

"TEMPLE ISRAEL"

methods require a great number of judicial oaths which are spoken carelessly. I was compelled to hear frequently the disagreeable statement, an American oath amounts to nothing; something which no one understands is mumbled, amen is said, and the book is kissed. There were people who were always involved in some lawsuit or other, and, as was claimed, there was a standing army of witnesses who knew everything and swore to anything. This aroused public attention. These people were feared and avoided.

One day a suit was being tried in court, and several Jewish witnesses were examined. The opposing counsel had the four most prominent Jewish merchants summoned—I believe they were Schloss, Blattner, Cohn, and Sporberg—administered the oath to them, and then asked each one, "Do you believe what these people (the witnesses who had testified before) declare under oath?" The four men answered in the negative. This invalidated the testimony. The other lawyer, who saw that his side was losing the case, declared in his speech that the court had no reason to believe any Jew under oath, and added that he himself believed no Jew under oath. Fifteen minutes later the clerk of the court related the whole proceeding to me in my house. The blood froze in my veins. "You are pale," said the actuary. "I am not well; I have not slept well," said I. I remained quiet until he had gone; then, however, I wept a very flood of tears for anger, and I had not cried for years. My wife heard me sobbing in uncontrollable rage, and came to my side hurriedly.

"I am really sick; I have read too much," said I, to quiet her. "I must go out into the fresh air and walk several hours." With these words I darted from the house like one possessed. After walking an hour I grew calmer, and returned to the city. I went to the office of the *Argus*, had the lawyer in question summoned, and—but no! I will not write down what I said to this fellow. Grosswell, the editor, later Minister to Russia, interfered, or else the result might have been quite serious. He urged a settlement of our differences, and succeeded in reconciling us. The next morning the lawyer announced in all the papers that he had made a false accusation against the character of the Jews in the heat of argument, that he regretted and retracted the same, etc. The poor lawyer was called to account late at night also by Jacob Cohn, who knew nothing of my encounter, and the next day he was so bitterly arraigned by Amos Dean, Rufus Peckham, and the district attorney, that he went to Judge Parker and begged his pardon for having demeaned himself in so unseemly a manner the day before.

On the following Sabbath the very men who had been accused of perjury sat close before me in the synagogue; the Ten Commandments were read from the *Torah*. It seemed to me that these people jeered at me as I stepped into the pulpit. I spoke on oaths and perjury, but as quietly and calmly as possible under the circumstances. It seemed to me, however, that these men were still mocking me, and winking at one another. I grew more and more excited, until I was finally so carried away that I opened

the ark, took out the *Torah*, and said: "I swear by this *Torah* that the perjurers who disgrace the name of Israel will not live their full quota of years." The joke was now at an end. The congregation sat in their places deathly pale, not a breath was audible. I placed the *Torah* in the ark, and fell back fainting into my chair. Two men led me home from the synagogue.

The tempest that followed this storm can be well imagined. A printed lampoon consisting of foolish rhymes appeared against me; my adherents wrote and circulated a counter-lampoon. Very little could be said against me, for I avoided the ridiculous as carefully as the bad. These people had been exposed. Fear and dread of them had been removed; so that the lawsuits and the oaths were no more; their occupation was gone; but the number of my opponents was augmented by these embittered enemies. I was maligned and mortified all the more. I bore it all patiently. I did not imagine that it could be any better elsewhere, nor did I neglect my official duties and my studies even for one moment. I prepared myself for the decisive contest, and thought it better to put up with these annoyances than to engage in a public contest and fail. I wanted to wait. All in all, my situation was not so bad. I lived happily in my home, had splendid friends in Jewish and non-Jewish circles, stood well with the American aristocracy, had two large libraries at my disposal, required very little, and had very much. I was able to help the poor, and was idolized by my pupils. Even the children of those who hated and persecuted

me were greatly attached to me. No man can be more than satisfied; and I was so after every storm, although my wife often laughed at me on account of my astonishing show of optimism, and my contentment, which was greater than that of Diogenes, for I was indifferent even to the light of the sun.

One morning late in the autumn of the year 1847, a lean, pock-marked, clean-shaven little man, clad in black, stepped into my study. The sparkling eye and the black hair betrayed the Jew, the rapid enunciation designated the foreigner, and the readiness and unrestraint denoted the man of intellect.

"Whose acquaintance have I the honor of forming?"

"My name is Isaac Leeser."

"I am happy to make your personal acquaintance."

Explanations followed, and in one-half hour we understood each other thoroughly, for there was nothing to conceal on either side. Leeser seemed to me a man worthy of respect, because he had espoused the cause of Judaism earnestly and zealously at a time when it had no representative on the press. He appeared to me honest and well-meaning in his orthodoxy. He had conceived Judaism from this standpoint, and had not advanced beyond it. A man who strives for ideals is always superior to him who works only for material sustenance, honor, and wealth.

These idealists are the true nobility of the human race, however morbid they may be at times. They recognize, they long for something higher, for something foreign to the animal nature. I treated Leeser very respectfully. He seemed to appreciate being

treated thus by an opponent. He informed me of his sufferings and his struggles, and in a few hours we were very friendly. He came with the intention of spending several days in Albany; but the weather was so inclement that he was able to spend only two days with me, since he had recovered but recently from a severe illness. It was only on the second day of his stay that he told me the real reason of his coming to Albany, to-wit:

In order to understand what follows, I must premise that the German Jews of America read little or no English at that time. The *Occident* was published for native-born, English, some Polish, and Dutch Jews. The latter were Talmudically orthodox; the native Jews were, if I may say so, tinged with Christian thought. They read only Christian religious literature, because there was no Jewish literature of this kind. They substituted God for Jesus, unity for trinity, the future Messiah for the Messiah who had already appeared, etc. There were Episcopalian Jews in New York, Quaker Jews in Philadelphia, Huguenot Jews in Charleston, and so on, everywhere according to the prevailing sect. Cabalistic mysticism underlay everything, as Mr. Boas, the Judaized consul of the United States in Palestine found later. It was but a step from Judaism to Christianity, and vice versa. A young clergyman, M. R. Miller, who is still living and still writes, had acquired a not inconsiderable knowledge of Jewish literature. He was not less anxious to convert the Jews, than were his fellow-clergymen, although he associated much, and was on a friendly footing with them. This man

Miller published a number of articles in the *Occident* signed Talmid, in which he showed that the orthodox standpoint in Judaism was the correct one. He mystified Leeser and his readers completely, inasmuch as he claimed that the foundation of Judaism lay in Christian mysticism. A storm arose against Leeser, and the good man was helpless owing to his ignorance of Jewish literature. He had appealed to a number of friends in New York, but no one offered to help him out of the tight place. Therefore he had to come to me, as he confessed openly. I had read the articles in question, had understood the hidden motive, and I promised to write rejoinders.

We parted in the best of humor. I began, erelong, to write the article, "Reason and Faith," which appeared in several successive numbers of the *Occident*. I did not call my opponent by name; but I refuted his standpoint and the conclusions based thereon. The rationalistic Maimonidean standpoint, which I expounded at length, served as the basis of my arguments. I quoted from the Zohar and other cabalistical works, in order to fight mysticism with its own weapons. I succeeded in even convincing Leeser that my rationalism, and not Miller's mysticism, was the Judaism of Jewish literature. The articles attracted attention. Leeser called me a true follower of the Maimonidean philosophy, gave me a number of high-sounding titles, dubbed me D. D., but not Reverend, for I was no *chazan*, and the *chazan* alone was the real Reverend. I have never cared much what people call me, whether they praise or condemn me. I learned early to be my own judge.

When I read my articles in cold type, I found them very poor. The thought did not seem to me compact enough, and very often obscure; the logic appeared faulty, and the style insipid. I regretted exceedingly that I had appeared in public print. Much as I was gratified in having obtained a hearing for the rational standpoint, I was none the less mortified by my scribbling.

About the same time I had another experience that dampened my ardor effectually. I was quite taken with the Herbartian psychology, and wrote a number of articles setting forth, as I thought, the chief principles of that psychological system. I was pleased with my work, and wished to have it printed. But Amos Dean was to read it beforehand. He read it, and was so polite as to advise me to let the manuscript lie for a while, and then examine it critically. I understood the hint, relinquished the thought of publication, and again applied myself to reading.

The months of February and March, 1848, agitated me to such a degree, that it was long before I returned to a state of normal calm. I became restless and discontented as I had never been before. One Sabbath afternoon I sat in the synagogue in the midst of my chosen friends, and delivered them a private address, as I often did. Moses Schloss entered the synagogue, and whispered in my ear, "Paris is in a state of revolution; Louis Philippe has abdicated." I jumped up electrified, repeated the portentous words, rushed out of the house towards the post-office, where the bulletins were usually posted, and found the report confirmed. A steamer from Eng-

land had brought the news of Louis Philippe's abdication. I ran from one newspaper office to another, but none had received any particulars. We had to wait fourteen days for further news. At that time only two European steamers arrived monthly during the winter season. Those days were as years of torment and uncertainty for me. I expected the proclamation of the European Republic, and made preparations to go to Europe at once. Upon the arrival of one important news item after the other, the establishment of the French Republic, the revolution in Vienna, Berlin, Hungary, Italy, etc., I felt patriotic for the first time. Back to the old home! This word sounded within me mightily. I informed the *parnass*, Gottlieb Smith (Schloss had retired), of my intention to resign, without giving him the real reason. I had to be explicit with my wife. When she learned of my purpose, she protested so energetically against it, begged me so earnestly to renounce it, and finally declared so decidedly that she would not return to Europe with her two little children, that I wavered, and felt truly unhappy. Nevertheless I handed in my resignation to the congregation, and I could not relinquish the thought of taking part in the re-birth of Europe.

Towards the end of March a great celebration took place in Albany. Speakers' stands were erected round about the capitol, bonfires blazed, thousands of torches were lit, the people acted as though possessed, speeches were made in English, German, Polish, Hungarian, Slavic, French, Italian. The rejoicing was unbounded. The universal Republic and

the Brotherhood of Man were proclaimed, and the world was declared redeemed and rejuvenated forthwith. Being one of the speakers, and desiring to say something sensible, I consulted beforehand with some noted politicians. I met in the office of the evening paper, William H. Seward, from whom I desired some information. Wonderful to say, he prophesied coldly and calmly the exact course and outcome of the revolution. "The peoples are not ready for freedom," said he, "and the revolution will end in the supremacy of the army." Several weeks later he made a similar statement in the Senate in regard to France. I was vexed at the frigid American; but his words cooled my ardor considerably. But when I heard a Hungarian abuse the Germans, and a German curse the Jews at the great celebration, I arrived at the conclusion that the peoples were not ready for freedom, and came home in a less ardent mood. When I heard that Heinzen and Dowiat, who had edited the *Express* to death, had returned to Europe, I went to New York, and consulted with Horace Greeley. He was of the same opinion as Seward, and advised me to remain quietly in this country. I began to struggle against my enthusiasm; but I could not succeed in overcoming it.

I had been at home an imperial-royal Bohemian *Schutzjude* on the estate of a decayed nobleman. My father was not permitted to call even a handbreadth of land his own; therefore, I had never had a fatherland. The barbarians, however, could not forbid my mother from conversing with me in the language of the country. Therefore, I had a mother tongue;

viz., German. It and German learning attached me to Germany. Barefooted boys, ragamuffins, and stupid cits had shouted hep! hep! at me so long, that I had grown accustomed to pity the whole lot, who, it is true, had succeeded in driving from my heart every trace of sympathy for the country, but not the inborn love for humanity. I recognized in the Revolution of 1848 the struggle of humanity against the stupid and stupefying element, and therefore my sympathies were so strongly excited. I wished to participate in the war of emancipation. Conditions compelled me to submit, and remain in this country. I would most probably have been lost in the contests of 1848 and 1849, for I lacked tact and moderation; but I could not comprehend this at the time, and I passed through a severe struggle.

At the same time that I entertained these patriotic and revolutionary ideas, and constructed air-castles for liberated humanity, I was exchanging letters with Isaac Leeser relative to a plan for the unification and elevation of American Jewry. The desire to improve the world is a sickness that causes many pains, sleepless nights, struggle, wounds, and disappointments. He who fights for all, receives the thanks of none. All mock him when he retires covered with wounds. If he is successful, many envy, suspect, and abuse him; but no one shares the sufferings which he experiences in the struggle, whether defeated or victorious. He must fight alone and solitary before his purpose is realized. Happy they who work at ease and in comfort in a narrow sphere,

who do no more than they must, smoke their cigars leisurely, drink their coffee, read a book, permit themselves to be admired from time to time, and look upon the whole world as a foreign province. These are the pets of fortune; they have an excellent digestion, and reach a good old age in health and strength. The desire to reform the world is a sickness which some people can not avoid; it is part and parcel of their spiritual make-up, and they must. They are the poorly-paid servants of Providence, the pikes in the fishpond of humanity, that any and every wretch may make the object of pursuit; but they must, because otherwise mankind would become stupid, stagnate, and decay.

There were at that time six Jewish schools in America; viz., in New York, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Albany. The school system in general was in a deplorable condition. Religious instruction was imparted one hour in the week by ladies. Leeser furnished the text-books, all ultra-orthodox. There were no Jewish charities, with the exception of several decaying *chebroth* and two societies in New York. There was no provision for widows and orphans, no hospital. In brief, the American Jews had not one public institution, except their synagogues. In lieu thereof, the missionaries lay in ambush everywhere, in order to bait some poor Jew. It was perfectly evident to me that Judaism would have no future in America, unless mighty upheavals, accompanied by constructive action, would arouse the better element into action, awaken and attract the thoughtless and

indifferent, so that it would become reconciled with the spirit of the age and the opinions prevalent in the new fatherland.

Leeser and I had agreed that a gathering of the representatives of the congregations would be a strong impetus. No matter what they might do at the first meeting, it could not but be a clear gain for Judaism. They would do something; the meeting would not result in nothing, and the impulse would continue to work. It was therefore resolved that Leeser should advocate the project personally in Philadelphia and in the West and South, and that I should make propaganda for it in the East, particularly in New York. I went to New York to consult with Lilienthal and Merzbacher. Lilienthal favored the plan. Merzbacher opposed it on account of the unpreparedness of the orthodox congregations for such a movement. I met some Cincinnatians at Lilienthal's, who were enthusiastic about the project, and stated that the congregation in Cincinnati would indorse it without a doubt. I knew that the same was the case with the Albany congregation.

Lilienthal was so cordial as to offer me his pulpit, and I preached for the first time in New York on the following Sabbath. As many people as could find sitting- or standing-room crowded in; the remainder stood in the vestibule, in front of the open windows and doors; yes, even on the opposite side of the street. I stepped to the pulpit wonderingly and reverently. Large masses always awaken in me the idea of the sublime, and fill me with reverence. Taking my text from the opening words of the *Sidrah* (*Tetza-*

weh), I preached on the necessity of reform and the efficacy of united action. I do not recall what I said, nor how I said it. At the request of Leeser, who was present, I wrote down in the evening as much of the sermon as I could remember. He translated it into English, and published it in the following number of the *Occident*, with accompanying apologies for my reform ideas. Yet I can still recall that my words roused the people mightily. The boards of the three German congregations promised me at the close of the service to lay the matter before their congregations, and to indorse it. The reform lightning, as this sermon was generally termed, had struck several important points, and all efforts to quench the fire were fruitless.

I returned to Albany sure of victory. Several days later, Mr. Schwab, now of Youngstown, but then *parnass* of the Louisville congregation, visited me. "You are the man for the young and energetic West," said he. "We have built a new synagogue in Louisville that is to be dedicated before *Pesach*. I invite you to deliver the oration, and I assure you that the congregation will elect you at a good salary." I was not disinclined to accept the invitation, although I gave no positive promise. I learned, upon careful inquiry, that the trip from Buffalo to Sandusky would have to be made in a wagon, because navigation on the lake was impossible on account of the ice. This would have necessitated a long and tedious journey. Therefore I relinquished the idea of going to Louisville.

In the meantime they had heard in Albany of my

New York *début* and of Schwab's offer. The presiding officers, Gottlieb Smith and H. Blattner, as well as all the members of the Board, were my intimate friends, and did not wish to accept my resignation. They concluded that something decisive must be done quickly, or else I would go to Louisville, or perhaps to New York, for thus it was rumored. They called a congregational meeting at an unusual time, for then meetings were held only during the *Pesach* or *Sukkoth* week. It was unanimously resolved to elect me for three years at the then considerable salary of six or eight hundred dollars per annum. After the resolution was adopted, a committee consisting of my best friends came to me, and submitted the proposition. My wife did not wish to leave Albany; nor did I, for it was our home. I therefore accepted the proposition, went with the committee to the meeting, and was greeted enthusiastically. All my opponents seemed to have become friends, and I believed that a lasting peace had been concluded.

The next evening a banquet took place, at which Moses Schloss made that memorable classical speech at a late hour, it is true, when the bottles were quite empty. "Our Wise," he said, pathetically. Then he curved his arm as much as he could, and, pointing to the curved arm, he continued: "If he says this is straight, it is straight. If there is any one who does not like it, let him help himself." This expressed the true state of affairs. My friends considered everything right that I said or did, no matter how queer it may have been. Everything seemed to be moving along smoothly. But at *Pesach*, when the peddlers

were all at home, the trouble began. My opponents were again active. "You had no right," they declared, "to elect a man for three years at so large a salary without our knowledge and consent." I had intended to take a trip to New York with my wife on *chol hammoed*. We were prepared to start on the first day towards evening. The conveyance that was to take us to the steamer stood in front of the door. The trunk had been already placed in it, when a man rushed breathlessly into the room, and with difficulty uttered the words, "Blows at the congregational meeting." "Wait a moment," I called to my wife, who was in the next room; "we have time, and I must go and see what is the matter." I then placed a paper in my pocket, and went hurriedly to the place of meeting. When I opened the door the fight had not yet commenced; but the fighters stood ready to begin, and messengers had been sent to call the police. Upon my entrance a pause ensued, which I took advantage of. "Mr. President, may I ask what is the cause of this excitment?" "Certainly. The cause is the contract which the congregation has made with you." "A contract is, as is well known, a piece of paper," I continued, as I took it out of my pocket. "Here is the piece of paper. If I destroy it, the cause of the disturbance exists no longer." I tore up the contract, threw the pieces into the fire, and in a jiffy I was outside, hurried home, placed my wife in the wagon, reached the dock just in time, and proceeded towards New York. As I learned later, there was such an uproar in the meeting that the president was compelled to adjourn it. Telegrams

and letters were sent to me to New York. "Friends should not be left in the lurch in this wise;" "the tearing of the paper on which it was written does not invalidate a contract;" "you serve your enemies, not your friends;" "no honest workman deserts his post in the midst of uncompleted work." Such and similar reproaches, exhortations, and advices followed each other in quick succession, although I had related the occurrence to no one, not even to my wife, and it had never occurred to me to leave Albany in such an unceremonious manner.

I met with great discouragement in New York. All the enthusiasm which had been enkindled for the progress in, and the union of, the congregations was directed by skilled manœuvering into a marsh, where it threatened to become extinguished and disappear forever. A Society of the Friends of Light, in whose halls Mrs. Kaiser delivered her powerful addresses somewhat later, was organized by an influential element, rich in words, but poor in energy. Here thought gave way to phrases, and action to senseless debate. Enthusiasm was diverted to and all attention turned towards this society, instead of being given to the movement for congregational union.

Some people had pushed themselves forward in the society who wished to be seen and heard, but who would rather have done away with Judaism altogether than assist in its development. I saw the grave of the newly-born plan, and stood at the bier silent, mourning, and bowed down. I went to the Boards of the congregations who had promised so much, but everything had been forgotten. "As for

New York," said one, "progress will have to emanate from the Society of the Friends of Light. No other movement is advisable for the present." Another one said that if any one listened to the plans and purposes of the apostles of reform, as set forth in the Society of the Friends of Light, he would become very orthodox, and would strive earnestly to oppose every reform movement. A third one said: "If the bridges are burnt behind us, and nothing can be effected with the Judaism of the past, as has been claimed in the Society of the Friends of Light, then let us attempt nothing, and leave everything as it has been." There was but one who encouraged me. He said openly and freely: "I have made the attempt to bring you to New York, and I am convinced that if you will preach here several times, they will not permit you to leave New York, although our *parnass* says that he can not endure the individual from Albany with the flowing hair." I now understood the situation, and retired.

Leeser had written me that they were waiting in Philadelphia until the congregations of New York would choose delegates; for the plan could not be carried out without the co-operation of New York. I wrote him plainly that the New York congregations had relinquished the plan, and that there was nothing more to be done in the matter. The first movement for union in American Judaism ended thus. I prowled about New York several days, gloomy, indignant, and depressed. I vouchsafed no answer to all the telegrams and letters that came from Albany. I was stupefied by the unexpected turn of affairs.

The evening before my departure, Dr. Lilienthal asked me what I intended to do now. "I am going back to Albany," I answered, "and as truly as I am the son of a Jewish mother, I shall divide this American Judaism into two inimical camps, and they shall overcome the abominable indifference, repair the damages, and achieve the triumph of a new life by fight and struggle."

We optimistic idealists have a remarkable power of consoling ourselves if we stumble over rocks and do not break our necks, or if we are stoned by a crowd of mischievous boys and do not lose an eye. If we have worked, suffered, struggled for an idea, and finally failed, we console ourselves with the reflection that ideas never die; they are seeds which seemingly rot in the earth; but the spring sunshine lures the shoots out of the cold ground. All this is very true; but it is cold comfort for the struggling soul. The child wants its apple when it has finished its lesson, the workman wants his wage, the fighter longs for victory. Still, ideas never die; and since the spring of 1848 the idea of reform, the idea of union, the thoughts given expression on the care of the poor, the widow, the orphan, on hospitals, etc., have never disappeared. They have been taken up, one by one; the seeds have sprouted gradually. Even the first struggle was not without immediate results, for persons of importance had been won for the cause of progress; but this was not evident enough immediately. I considered myself completely worsted. At that time I was not yet a hardened fighter; I was still very sensitive.

My wife learned nothing of all this, not only because I am non-communicative by nature and hide every grief deep within me, but also because I did not wish to poison her joyous disposition. Even later I never drew my wife into my struggles and sufferings, although I always had the fullest confidence in her intelligence and sympathy. Selfishness had something to do with this, as I did not wish to be disturbed in my home life. I succeeded in carrying out my desire. Serene peace ruled in my home. No matter what took place outside, not a word was said about it at home. I returned to Albany with my wife on the last day of *chol hammoed*. She had spent most agreeable days in New York, had made handsome purchases, and was thoroughly happy. She chatted all day long about the city and the people, the superb views along the Hudson, the beautiful villas, towns, etc. All this pleased and cheered me greatly.

I had scarcely reached home before I was surrounded by my friends. "Will you not preach tomorrow?" every one asked; and when I answered affirmatively, it required no newspaper notice to spread the fact far and wide. In the morning the synagogue was crowded. Many had come to hear the thunder that I was expected to give vent to because of the stormy congregational meeting; but they were doomed to disappointment. I preached as well as I could, both on the seventh and eighth days of the feast of Passover, without touching those occurrences, and attended to my duties as usual. Cohn and Moses whimpered as usual; Bernhard Smith slept

softly as always; Rosenbaum was enchanted; Mayer Isaac and Wolf Simon cracked their jokes after the service; Tschesky had never heard such a sermon in Poland; Kastanienbaum had experienced the like at the time he was living in service; the women were moved to tears, a fact that Marianne Smith imparted to me dutifully immediately after dinner; the choir sang beautiful selections; everything proceeded as usual; everything was as it had been. In the afternoon my first adjutant, the tailor Rosenbaum, who looked upon me as the greatest man living, came to me and wanted to know why I had not given those people a good rating. "Because I would necessarily have to be partisan, or at least appear so in this affair," I answered, "and therefore I must keep silent; besides, I never air personal affairs and grievances in the pulpit." Rosenbaum laughed, and questioned further, "Who, then, is in the pulpit when you preach?" "Not I, the individual," I answered; "but the chosen teacher of the congregation." Rosenbaum was satisfied. If I had said just the opposite, he would have been satisfied also. The presiding officers came on the second afternoon. "The adjourned meeting of the congregation will take place to-night," said Blattner, in the name of the whole Board; "the president will declare every motion having reference to your contract out of order, and will call for the regular order, since the contract is not void nor invalidated, as our counsel assures us. The opponents have bethought themselves, and will be perfectly satisfied."

"The contract is void as far as I am concerned,"

I replied. "I release the congregation from all obligations. I will accept any contract that the majority resolves upon, in order not to wound the feelings of my friends; but a vote must be taken. I reserve the right not to sign any contract, and to resign at any time that matters are made too unpleasant for me." A debate of two hours did not succeed in moving me from the stand I had taken. The whole proceeding was reported at the general meeting that took place that evening. But who can fathom the human heart? At eight o'clock in the evening a committee composed of my most violent opponents appeared, and notified me that I had been elected unanimously for three years at a salary of eight hundred dollars, and requested me, in the name of all the members, to go with them to the meeting, and declare that I felt fully reconciled. Each one extended his hand to me, and begged me to forget the past, and to live in peace and friendship with them in the future. I was surprised and deeply moved. I followed them to the meeting-place, and after I had spoken a few words of peace and reconciliation, joy reigned unconfined; my opponents crowded up to me, shook me by the hand, and were most cordial and amiable; my friends were overjoyed; Gottlieb Smith and the remaining members of the Board celebrated a triumph; there was feasting, drinking, and speech-making galore. It seemed as though perpetual peace had come.

The next morning I went to my school as usual. The children had heard for several days that I would in all likelihood leave the city. They had learned the contrary the evening before. When I entered the

schoolhouse all the little folk streamed out of all the rooms toward me and kissed me, kissed my hands and my coat. They hovered about me like a swarm of bees, shouted, rejoiced, laughed, cried, clapped their hands, and danced. It took a half-hour before I could quiet young America. Then the teachers came and congratulated me, and everything moved along as before.

V

THE portions of my diary written during the summer of 1848 have a tinge of melancholy. I had a presentiment of approaching death. I knew that my lung was affected. Two years of uninterrupted exertion without recreation and sufficient sleep had quite consumed my vitality, and the exciting events of the past two months had produced in me a nervous irritability, which I could overcome only with difficulty. Friendly physicians called my attention to my pallid countenance, the blue rings under my eyes, and my listless and tottering gait. They prescribed various remedies; but I neglected to use them. I was haunted by a presentiment of death, and this made me disregard all medicaments. This condition set a limit to my plans to improve the world. I saw everything through a glass darkly, and was sadly depressed.

Two highly-educated *chazanim* were carrying on a controversy in the *Occident* on the permissibility of the rite of confirmation in Judaism. One went so far as to reproach his opponent who favored confirmation, by saying that his Judaism did not amount to very much since he always used the Christian date even in congregational documents. Since I had my school boys and girls ready for confirmation, I introduced this rite on *Shabuoth*, and had it reported

in the local press. This brought a wasp's nest about my ears. The innovation met with great favor in Albany. A certain Katzenellenbogen, an itinerant rabbi, was in Albany at the time. After he had obtained the money that he had come to Albany for, he returned to New York, and stirred up the whole crowd against me. This called forth a number of strong articles against me from the pen of the celebrated Rabbi Abraham Reiss, of Baltimore. I did not answer him, thanks be to God! I began to call myself to account, and to consider it impertinent to be thus opposing everybody. I contended with my longings for reform, and said to myself quite plainly, "You are neither able nor justified to undertake the task of instructing the whole American Jewry," and I wrote above my study-table the motto:

כל הפורץ גדר ישכנו נחש*

I said to myself further, "It is easy to disturb people in their religious convictions. To inculcate something better to take the place thereof is a task to which I am unequal." I flagged. I was truly sick.

My friends, whom I met daily at the library, began to remonstrate with me also. "You must give up reading such heavy books," said Chief-Justice Wood, or else you will be a dead man in two years. Others said the same thing to me in different words. "If I fritter away my time in idleness, I will certainly be a dead man in two years," said I to Wood. "O! read nonsensical stuff," said he; "*e. g.*, Streeter's poems, Warburton's 'Mission of Moses;' read Methodist ser-

* The serpent will bite him who breaks down a wall.

mons, Christian catechisms, the confessions of converted Jews. There is plenty of nonsense in the world." "These things do not interest me," I answered. Then Streeter pounced upon Wood, and matters grew interesting. Wood scintillated, Streeter hissed, and the public, consisting of Theophilus Wood and myself, was highly entertained. Finally a bizarre notion struck the Chief-Justice. "Over there you will find two hundred volumes on Asiatic and African mythology. Try them. I wish you a good digestion. You will be able to read them without damage, just as little children can eat pap without hurting their teeth or stomach. You will find in those volumes all the preposterous absurdities which have passed for religion everywhere and at all times. You will become familiar with the gods of Streeter's poetry, and will learn in what workshop his Christianity was manufactured. I assure you, mythology is a splendid digestive. You will be edified without needing to think even as is the case with a bishop. You will laugh heartily, and finally comprehend how stupid mankind has been from the very beginning of time."

Every word of the sarcastic pessimist wounded me, and yet, I know not why, I took the keys of that case, and began to read mythology. True, I had formed a notion of this branch of learning from the works of Herder, Schelling, and Kreuzer. I soon discovered, however, how insignificant was my acquaintance with this literature. I found here the works of French and English investigators of three centuries on Eastern and Southern Asia and Africa, men of whom I had never heard. I began to read

mythology, and, let no one laugh, it took three years before I could tear myself away from it, and then only perforce. Later, when the researches of Rénan and Müller caused so great a sensation, it seemed almost ridiculous to me, for I found nothing new in their books beyond their exceedingly unsound philological combinations; but I discovered, on the other hand, that there was much which was old, that they had taken no account of. The English officials in Eastern and Southern Asia have made wonderful contributions to this branch of learned investigation.

True, I read mythology to restore my health; but I did not succeed. In the early summer of 1848 many immigrants came to these shores from France and Germany, and among them was Dr. Joseph Lewi, from Bohemia. As soon as I heard of this, I commissioned a friend to bid the doctor come to me at once to Albany. He brought me the comical answer that Dr. Lewi was of the opinion that he would be a burden to me for some time, and that since all friendship ceases in America, each one had to look out for himself. Thereupon I wrote the following brief epistle, "Dr. Lewi, if you do not come to me at once to Albany, never call me friend again." Dr. Lewi made his appearance two days later at 77 Ferry Street, and I was heartily glad to have a house friend. We agreed very well with one another, and have remained friends. "For heaven's sake, how dreadful you look!" said the newly-arrived friend. I felt again the presentiment of death, that had for a time been forgotten. The physician prescribed for me several days after. "You can not continue to live as you

are doing," said he. "You must eat raw meat for breakfast; in fact, you must eat more than you do and more nourishing food. You must drink beer, take cold plunge baths, and a great deal of exercise." It was the first time in my life that I submitted to a physician's orders, and this time I obeyed. A great epoch-making event had just taken place in Albany; viz., a place was opened where Philadelphia lager-beer was sold, and shortly thereafter civilization took the further great stride forward, inasmuch as a German established a brewery. I followed Dr. Lewi's prescription; accustomed myself to eat raw meat; yes, to eat more food, to drink beer, to take cold baths, and to walk a great deal. My daily walking companions were Joseph Sporberg, who took very short steps, or Jacob Cohn, who walked in seven-mile-boot fashion. Within a few months I had improved greatly; but then a great conflagration reduced half of Albany to ashes, and my second child became very sick. These two mishaps caused a relapse, so that I could not think of doing any work, even in the fall. My physician forbade all reading, would not permit me to go to the State Library, and put the key of my study in his pocket. Now I had nothing to read but Goethe's "Faust," and brooded the more on Goethe's thoughts, on Job, and Kant's moral philosophy, so that the abstention from reading was really worse for me.

I was in New York but once during the summer of 1848. Merzbacher, of blessed memory, had invited me to preach in Temple Emanuel, situated at that time on Christy Street. I did so. Several

days later the Board of the congregation adopted a resolution to the effect that in future no one should be permitted to preach in the temple without their consent. *Parnassim* were autocrats in those days, and rabbis the paid servants of the congregations. I knew this well; therefore it was quite in order that the rabbi could not invite a colleague to occupy his pulpit; but it appeared strange to me that the resolution was adopted so soon after my sermon was preached there. I therefore asked a man in whom I reposed full confidence about it. He visited me in Albany, and explained the whole affair to me. "Some of our people," said he, "who are beginning to grow rich and aristocratic, look upon reform as a privilege of the aristocracy. You, however, appear before the people at large, and give expression to ideas of reform and progress, and for that reason they are prejudiced against you. Besides, you have the reputation of being an agitator and disturber, and therefore many are afraid of your influence. Others fear your radicalism, and accuse you of the desire to destroy and to introduce innovations. The resolution of the Board was really directed at you."

Merzbacher sat in an adjoining room playing chess with my wife. The words which he had spoken at our first meeting occurred to me. I also thought of Seward's words, "The nations are not ready for freedom," and I remained silent as the grave. This was trying for my friend, and he himself resumed the conversation by saying, "I know you feel hurt; but you expect to hear the truth from me, and therefore I had to tell it to you unreservedly."

"Make no excuses, my dear friend. Truth never hurts, but teaches me." I handed him my autograph album, in which he wrote, "The good man requires no encouragement to do good." "Yes," I added, "nor can he expect recognition or thanks. If he does, he will be deceived in his expectations."

I recognized that I stood alone, and could depend neither for support nor sympathy on Germans or Poles. But since the people desire neither me nor my ideas, thought I, I shall accustom myself to eat my morsel in peace until it shall please Providence to relieve me of my office. I became at once exceedingly amiable, obliging, tractable, polite, careless, and sociable. The people came in great multitudes to the synagogue on the following fall holidays to hear me preach. I declaimed charmingly; hysterical women wrote me anonymous love-letters; eccentric men looked upon me as a demi-god, for I did not mention reform nor progress, but uttered rhapsodies on Israel's greatness and Israel's imperishable treasures. The fall of 1848 found me a half-dead apostle of peace, submissive, humble, and despairing. Not one of the hundreds who heard me preach from the pulpit or jest lightsomely in society at that time understood my state of mind. My sufferings were my own.

The summer and fall of 1848 brought a fresh and intelligent element into the population of the United States. This included people with eccentric ideas about freedom, communists, socialists, runaway students, atheists, and pettifoggers; also enemies of freedom, deserters, shipwrecked speculators, bank-

rupt merchants, ragged trades-apprentices, questionable professors, frightened farmers and artisans, vagabond adventurers, rogues who had been set at liberty, and other rabble; but the great majority of the new immigrants were intelligent and cultured, freedom-loving, and desirous of settling in the New World. I saw barons serve as waiters, counts as cigar-makers, staff-officers as clerks, ex-professors as factory hands. All this aroused very little notice, because well-nigh every immigrant could lay claim to some title, belonged to some prominent family, and had been a staff officer, a high official, of noble birth, or at least a physician or professor. Every young man had attended some university or polytechnical school, and was an officer. Every one had fought on the barricades, and performed some deed of heroism. It was therefore no longer surprising that so many lofty personages were compelled to perform manual labor, no matter how great their pretensions were otherwise.

The Jews who landed here were mostly young people. They came to their senses very quickly, and accommodated themselves to the new conditions. Some queer characters appeared occasionally. I knew one immigrant who began his career in the New World as a canal-boat driver. Upon failing in this, he became a schoolmaster, then an itinerant musician, until finally he hit on the happy idea of joining a troupe of actors; but not being able to stand being hissed, he investigated his ways, repented, was baptized, became a preacher, married, ran away, enlisted as a soldier, succeeded in the army to such a

Aet. Seventy-three

degree that he was placed in the hospital service. Here he became a nurse; but he is still of the firm opinion that he was intended for a better fate. Another of this same ilk claimed to be an optician, sold spectacles, called himself professor, pretended to be able to grind glasses even for half-blind horses, and furnished spectacles for men and horses, until one fine morning he called to mind that he had been a lawyer in Europe. He went to T., and established himself as an attorney. Receiving but little practice, he became a politician, and within three years was an inmate of the penitentiary, whence he wrote to me. I succeeded in having him released at the end of six months, brought him from Sing Sing to New York, procured passage for him on a steamer bound for Mexico. I heard nothing from him till after the French invasion, when he wrote me from Pueblo, and signed himself "general." I scarcely believed him, for he had changed his name. Another came to me on *Shabuoth*, 1849, and imparted to me the tragical information that he was going to drown himself. He claimed to have entered the service of a barber; but he was too old to learn the trade; therefore he was the target of constant mockery, which he could no longer endure. "Very well," said I, "I will procure decent burial for your body in case it is found." He looked at me in astonishment. I gave him a free lecture on cowardice, etc., and invited him to come again on the morrow, if he should still be in the land of the living. He came. I procured a hundred dollars' worth of goods for him on credit. He went peddling, and soon became a respectable merchant.

He is the same to this day in the city of New York. Another who is at present quite a prominent merchant in New York, was a tinner's apprentice when he was twenty or twenty-one years old. He received three dollars a week, of which he spent two dollars and a half for board and lodging. He had come to this country with the idea that every man should learn a trade. I took him to ——, procured a position for him in a store. He was industrious and honest, and advanced rapidly. There were many opportunities at that time for young men. I had little money, but wide acquaintance and influence, and was enabled to help many. My home was a hotel. He who wished came and ate. There was always an abundance, and my wife was always happy when she could do a stranger a good turn. As a result, I had many warm friends among the younger generation.

We formed a German literary society in the year 1848. Cultured people were to meet here. German life and thought were in a sorry plight in America at that time. The Germans spoke and wrote a wretched jargon composed of German-English phrases and words, so that the newly-arrived immigrant could frequently not understand his countrymen. There was not one German paper in the East, outside of New York, that did not use this jargon, not one in the South, and but two or three in the whole West. The natives looked down upon the Germans and everything German with a kind of contempt. They called them Dutch, *i. e.*, common; while on the other hand Frenchmen and Poles were highly respected for their love of liberty. The events of

1848 had raised the Germans very much in public estimation, and the immigration of so many intelligent people re-enforced this favorable turn of opinion. The German literary society of Albany was founded long before German societies for the cultivation of German literature and the German language became general.

A number of young people, including Dr. Lewi, the two brothers Beckel, Jacob Bamberger, Jacob Blumenthal, Moses Sporberg, Edward Bloch, Arnold Kaichen (deceased), Edward Sinsheimer, Leopold Stern (deceased), Herman Glouber, now in San Francisco, Professor Backhaus, who could read Geibel's poems well, and others, organized said society for the purpose of speaking and debating in German, giving German readings, conducting a theater, and encouraging social intercourse. My opponents called the society the rabbinical guard. This was not far from the mark, for it consisted of my warmest friends, with whom I passed many happy hours, and who always supported me like brothers in time of need.

Shortly thereafter we made a geological discovery; that is, we found beneath the ground, or, in other words, in a wretched basement one story lower than the street, a certain Mr. Liberati, with his wife and sister-in-law, the daughters of the actor Spizeder. They were a musical family, but in such reduced circumstances that they had to full uppers for shoemakers. Liberati was, as he himself said, one of those Berliners who never had an idea; but he was an excellent singer and vocal teacher. We brought him forth from his subterranean hiding-place, and

constituted him commander-in-chief of all the musical forces at our command. In the first place, he was elevated to the position of teacher, director, and first tenor of our synagogal choir. He was the first non-Jew to sing in such a choir. He was often assisted by his wife and sister-in-law. We gathered together also all those who had any musical talent within and without the literary society, and formed in the literary society the first German singing society. Albany began to speak and to sing German in 1849. The efforts were not always worthy of praise; but occasionally there were excellent literary and musical performances. The debates were very poor in the beginning; but they grew better and better in the course of time. Slight mistakes made in the heat of debate, such as Rasperan for Spartan, *Tzclem*-carrier for crusader, milk-soup for milky way, and the like, although causing laughter, never prevented the debaters from trying again, until finally young people and elderly shoemakers, tailors and unschooled shopkeepers, succeeded in expressing their thoughts smoothly and elegantly.

We were very unfortunate in the beginning with our singing society, notably because of the lack of good female voices; but we gave concerts nevertheless. Gradually several excellent women's voices were cultivated, and Albany had to sing; whether well or poorly, whether willingly or unwillingly, Albany had to sing. In the entire eastern section of the country there was at that time no German literary and singing society besides this one at Albany. At the same time we began an agitation among the non-

Jewish German population of Albany to start a German school for our co-member, Professor Backhaus, and we succeeded in this. Thus the first German school of Albany was founded, although German had always been taught in my own school. Later we were instrumental in founding the German Immigration Society, and had even to serve as secret policemen in order to protect the immigrants. I myself carried in my pocket such a commission from Mayor Perry, and was often engaged in active service to restrain the rabble who robbed the immigrants. Yet malevolent people accuse me of being inimical to matters German. I have always disdained to defend myself, and I continue to do so.

Two characteristic occurrences that took place in the literary and singing societies may be recounted here. Liberati, as is usually the case with artists, was always hard up. It was resolved to give a benefit performance; viz., a concert in the hall of the Female Academy, the meeting-place of the elite. After many rehearsals and extensive advertisements, the concert took place. The audience sat on the upholstered benches in eager anticipation, until finally the mixed chorus sang the first number. Everything moved along smoothly until the star of the evening, Liberati, appeared. Then the misfortune began. He had a little, snarling, growling, vicious dog, which could not be separated from its master by any device. The animal was one of Darwin's religious dogs, which worshiped its master, but in a barking and ear-splitting fashion. As Liberati began to sing, the growling little beast began to howl dismally; and peals of

laughter drowned the discord. Some one took the dog by the nape of the neck, and threw it out, while it continued to whine in 3-4 measure. Liberati began his song anew; but, horrors! the dog sat outside on the window-frame, and howled dreadfully. The animal was thrown down from the window, and Liberati began a third time. The dog now rushed, whining and howling, along the passage-way, and looked for its well-beloved and highly-revered lord and master, and growled without ceasing because of the imagined misfortune. How malicious is fate! The causes of great events are often thus small and insignificant. The first great German concert would have been a disastrous failure because of a dog which no one wanted, had not Liberati taken the dog home at the last moment and tied it fast. But after that the concert was a success. The German Literary and Singing Society crowned itself with glory, and Liberati (without his dog) was the hero of the day.

Somewhat later the literary society acquired a beautiful home in the house of Mr. Abraham Westheimer. A stage was erected here. Since most of the members were Jews, Schiller's Robbers had to be performed as a matter of course. Now active study and rehearsal began, and every one "robbed." One of our Jacobs undertook the rôle of Franz Moor, studied diligently, and, in order to strangle himself decently, took special lessons in suicide *a la* Moor. He was conscious of his mastership, and trod upon the stage sure of victory. The audience was large, and followed the play with strained at-

tention. The breathless quiet in the auditorium was broken only by the applause. Among the audience there is, however, also a "green" sister of our artistic Jacob. She sits enchanted. She listens and looks and wonders, until finally Franz becomes entirely *m'shugga* in the strangling scene. This frightens the loving sister out of her wits, and she cries aloud, with piercing voice, "*Sh'ma Yisroel*, Jacob, you are strangling yourself!" Some one tugs at her dress to make her keep quiet; but she cries still more loudly, "*Sh'ma Yisroel*, he strangles himself anyway!" It was most painful. The good fellow had studied suicide so thoroughly, had played it so splendidly, had portrayed it so masterfully; and now the wretched sister has to spoil it all! Yes, truly, man proposes and God disposes.

Although there were many such laughable occurrences, yet the society was in truth a remarkable achievement. The degrading saloon life had no longer any attractions for the members. Good society, decency, and instructive as well as entertaining conversation were to be found always in the society's rooms. Tone, language, and taste were ennobled, knowledge was increased, and the members became in time real friends to one another. Many a song that was sung there still sounds in my ear, and many a beautiful word spoken there sank into receptive hearts. The society was an institute of culture for very many.

For me the society was an oasis in the wilderness; for there I found myself among my best, truest, and warmest friends, with whom I could exchange ideas

freely, so that even now every one of them is vividly present before me, and every friend of those days is still dear to me.

Our choir in the synagogue grew better and better. A Mr. Brand, from Reggendorf, a young man of musical education, a clerk of Moses Schloss, undertook the direction of the choir, and accomplished much. He gave his services gratis. Brand was an enthusiastic musician, and succeeded in arousing the singers to do their best. They studied Sulzer's compositions, and succeeded in rendering them very passably. I enjoyed being present at the rehearsals, and assisted as far as I was able. At times I even instructed the singers. The magic power of music enlivened and refreshed me in dark hours.

When Liberati undertook the direction of the choir, he found it fairly well prepared. Had it not been for the choir, the literary society would not have succeeded in organizing a singing section. The choir, as a matter of course, improved greatly under Liberati's direction and instruction.

But my opponents had no ear for music. Although the choir cost the congregation scarcely anything, it was a thorn in their side. They bewailed the disappearance of the old sing-song, and there were constant bickerings. Two questions stirred up the waters of strife once again. I wanted to have German and English hymns sung during the service, and they wanted to recite the *Y'qum Purqan*. This proved an apple of discord. True, the hymns

were sung, but the harmony was missing. The innovation was discussed in all the saloons, and loudly condemned, until the minority finally succeeded in carrying a resolution to eliminate the hymns from the service at a meeting in which they claimed to be in the majority. Since neither party, however, would surrender, I was compelled to introduce a service on Sabbath afternoon, when hymns were sung. During the morning service the hymns were limited to a song before and after the sermon. Even this was a source of great aggravation to the conservatives. I had a friend by the name of Dr. Campbell, the minister of a very large Christian congregation. I came into frequent contact with him since we were both members of the Purchasing Committees of the two libraries. This man was learned and liberal. We exchanged thoughts and held many interesting conversations. I told him this affair of the hymns. "I am not surprised at that," said my friend. "They say that I have the most intelligent congregation in Albany, and yet it is only fifteen years since a choir was established, and that, too, with great effort, the ultra-orthodox element being bitterly opposed to it. The choir leader had no instrument; hence he frequently gave a false pitch. Finally he dared to bring a tuning-fork into the church in order to be able to give the right pitch always. An old, gray-haired pillar of the Church, who heard and saw the unfortunate tuning-fork, arose in the midst of the service, and cried out with a loud voice, 'I demand that this instrument of hell be removed from the

house of God!' and, in truth, the tuning-fork was not permitted to be brought into the church for a long time."

Ah! so there are also narrow-minded Christians, thought I; but this does not excuse the Jews. My opponents advanced the argument that I wished to introduce the hymns in order to make myself popular among the Christians. One of them reproached my wife bitterly, thus: "Your husband associates the year round with *goyim*, *gallachim*, and *s'roress*. He wishes to have nothing to do with us Jews. The *Goyim* will thank him heartily after he has *shmad* us all."

Then there was a second cause of contention. The neglect of the growing youth was general among the immigrants. The girls were given no education, and the boys had to begin to earn their living at thirteen. The height of a father's ambition was to place his son in some business as errand or store boy. I attempted to effect some improvement in this matter. There were two higher institutions of learning for boys and girls in Albany, called academies, where the sons and daughters of the aristocratic families received their education. The directors of both institutions treated me very cordially, visited my school, attended the examinations, and showed a great interest in my young people. I knew that every one of my scholars would be admitted into the academy without examination, and insisted that the best pupils should be sent there. My friends seconded my wishes, and I had the satisfaction of sending to both academies male and female schol-

ars who were well prepared and able. I thought to myself, These children will be brought into new surroundings, their views will be changed, and they will be lifted out of the lower strata of society. This thought of mine attained realization; for it became the fashion later to send the children to the academies; and many a youth of splendid powers was educated there. My opponents thought otherwise. "He wants to *shmad* the children," was the war-cry. "We have a Jewish school, and now he himself takes the children to the Christian schools." Thus sounded the lamentation. One of them said to me on the day before *Yom Kippur:* "I shall not go to the synagogue to-morrow. I do not intend to be converted this year to Christianity." I never spoke with that man from that day. I wrote in my diary on the day after *Yom Kippur:* "He who is greatly praised and appreciated is also greatly misunderstood and condemned. Avoid the former in order to be spared the latter. He whose plans are readily praised and lauded by every one stands but little above the average man." I did not cease preaching on light and progress with all my might. I spoke from the pulpit clearly and unreservedly in accordance with my innermost convictions, and cared little how much the people protested. With the improvement of my health I awoke again to the consciousness of my duty and my mission. "What do you hope to accomplish with these people?" said Theophilus Wood to me one day. "There are many among them who are incapable of thought." "Nevertheless," I answered, "I am under a compulsion to

uplift this Judaism and gain recognition for it, or to succumb in the struggle. He is a worthless fellow who becomes faithless to his own convictions." The passion to improve the world had again taken possession of me. I struggled and strove, like one possessed, without purpose or forethought. I rushed on like a runaway horse, without plan or calculation, without wisdom or consideration. May God forgive my sins!

There was a further cause of discord still more serious than this, because it involved some of my best friends, and, most unfortunate part of all, the women also. As is well known, women were compelled to sit in the gallery. They were not admitted to the floor of the synagogue. The synagogue of the *Bethel* congregation was small. Every seat was sold. Hence we could find no room for the choir. The choir increased in size; but the space in the synagogue did not. Besides, the girls did not wish to sit any longer among the men, and we had to make suitable provision for them. I suggested to apportion the seats anew, and to set apart half of the floor, as well as of the gallery, for the women. A storm of protests was raised at this because every seat had been sold, and because the suggested innovation itself met with strong opposition. The Board, under the leadership of Henry Blattner and Jacob Cohn, resolved upon a *coup d'etat*. The gallery on the north side of the synagogue, where the choice women's seats were, was extended towards the front, and this new portion was assigned to the choir, which occupied it on the following Sabbath. This was

the signal for an uprising of the Amazons. A front seat in the first row of the gallery was equivalent, in the eyes of every woman, to her jewelry and her finest clothes. A front seat was a distinction for life, the sign of wealth and dignity, a post of honor. A woman who occupied a front seat was an aristocrat, a prominent personage, a distinguished noblewoman in Jewry. All the women who had had front seats in the north gallery of the synagogue had lost their fine seats in a trice, and the choir sat in front of them. All the Sarahs, Rebeccas, Miriams, and Deborahs rose in their wrath, and the state was on the brink of destruction. The ladies began the campaign against the choir already during the service; but the choir endured in silence. After the service the terrible storm broke. The Board insisted on the innovation, the women protested, and their husbands had to take sides with them. Words and explanations were in vain. The bitter feelings grew from day to day, and there was likelihood that unpleasant occurrences would take place during the service. The Board had to yield, and the new portion of the gallery had to be removed. The choir did not wish to sing any more; for the girls objected strenuously to sitting among the men. Happily there was an unused space in the western end of the synagogue that had been set aside for the members of the Board. This space was brought into use. A stair was built from the substructure of the synagogue to this space, which was converted into a handsome perch, and provided with red curtains. The choir was placed here.

I was blamed for everything. My opponents made capital out of all these doings. The gallery was removed, but not the bitterness against me; this remained. I minded it very little; for I had acquired quite a fund of equanimity, and I would in all likelihood have paid very little attention to public opinion had not a curtain lecture—the first I had ever received—caused me to change front. One evening my wife entered my study solemnly, and sat down opposite me. I saw at once that a storm was brewing, and broke the deep silence in the tenderest manner. All in vain. The carefully-prepared curtain lecture had to be delivered. I can not recall the rather lengthy speech, although I followed it very closely; but I still remember the drift of it. It was somewhat as follows: "What will become of your wife and children if you lose your position; and you will certainly lose it if you will not treat your people more friendly and considerately. You are sick and frail, and you make matters worse by new struggles and exertions, which no other person would think of undertaking. Be sensible. Think of the future. Consider your wife and children. Take care of yourself, and be a little easier on people."

I was edified, deeply moved, and convinced of my foolish enthusiasm. I promised to be good, proper, wise, orderly, and domestic; in short, I promised everything which was necessary to make of me a humdrum Philistine, and I succeeded admirably in calming my wife.

VI

I MET Chief-Justice Wood the next day at the library, and told him how distasteful my position had grown to me because of the constant bickerings of my opponents, who did all they could to embitter my life. "If you must remain in the ministry absolutely," said he, "why do you not go to decent people, who will appreciate your talents and your achievements? You can accomplish nothing with these 'Dutchmen.' Take my advice, go to Campbell or Wykoff. They are both good friends of yours, and will treat you well. Take lessons in the Christian catechism. You will master the whole thing in a few days; then you will be baptized with great pomp, redeemed, reborn. In a few weeks you will be at the head of a rich congregation, which will consider itself fortunate in possessing such a prominent apostate. And, if not that, you can obtain a professorship somewhere. You will read, study think, and live as heretofore; you will be well placed and live in peace and quiet. Adieu ye Jews, adieu ye 'Dutchmen!'"

"Had I been willing to take such a step, I could have done it in Austria, and to much better advantage," I replied; "but I came to America in order to be able to live as a free man in accordance with my convictions." "Priests require no convictions;

hence, since you have convictions, you can not remain a priest," said he, earnestly. "The preacher accepts the standpoint of the congregation the moment he enters upon the position, explains, strengthens, and defends it. As soon as he urges his own convictions, he breaks his contract, and his occupation is gone."

"But if I leave the pulpit, what else can I do?"

"What can you do? You ought to be ashamed of this question, which shows so little courage. I pledge you my word that in a year from now you will be one of our best lawyers, if you will apply yourself diligently. I will take you as a partner as soon as I return to active practice."

I took note of this, and visited Amos Dean that same evening. He convinced me that I would be able to read enough in one year to prepare myself sufficiently for the practice of law. I went to the bookstore immediately, bought copies of Kent, Blackstone, and a legal lexicon, came home, and began to read. Alone in my room, as I thought, I soliloquized aloud in this fashion: "Ye books! Ye shall provide for my wife and children as surely as the stars glow in heaven; but men shall not move me a hair's-breadth from my convictions." But my little daughter lay in the adjoining room, and, hearing my voice, she came to me and said, or, rather, lisped: "Papa, mamma says the people here do not want you any longer. Stay with us; we want you." No! no! I shall not even attempt to describe my sensations. I took the child back to its little bed, and wept for the first time since I had stood on the

frontier between Bavaria and Saxony and cast a last glance at the beautiful Eger Valley. I was ashamed of my nervous sentimentalism; but I had to cry.

A young, learned, and convert-seeking clergyman was elected chief secretary of the Presbyterian General Assembly in the year 1849. Together with several other not unimportant colleagues he issued a manifesto to the Jews, and demanded that they enter the Presbyterian Church *in corpore*. Reasons were given, and the threat was added that the missionaries would visit the Jewish families and prepare them for conversion. This aroused the missionaries of other sects to redoubled activity among the Jews. The result was that shortly thereafter the whole country swarmed with conversion-apostles, and the conversion of the Jews was lauded in all pulpits as highly praiseworthy. Not one person on the Jewish side had a word to say in reference to this matter. The helpless multitude lay in complete inactivity. The missionaries did not come to Albany. Whenever one of them stopped off, Dr. Wykoff sent him away with the good advice to betake himself to a more fruitful field; hence I had no opportunity to fight against the agitation. One day, Isaac Leeser visited me and told me that he had written to all his contributors, and had requested them to write something in defense, but that he had received no answer whatever from the majority. Some had sent him useless treatises, and he himself was not in a condition to take up the question.

"Why did you not write to me?" I asked

"I must tell you the truth," Leeser answered, embarrassed. "My readers are much displeased at me for accepting contributions from your pen. They can not stand your rationalistic views."

"So they, too, wish to have nothing to do with me," I mused, as Leeser continued in an humbler tone: "I am, however, more concerned for Judaism than for my readers. I beg you, therefore, to take up the fight against the manifesto."

"I have the same duty," answered I. "I, too, am more concerned for Judaism than for your readers. Therefore I will take up the fight against the manifesto—*i. e.*, if my plan of campaign is agreeable to you."

"What is it?"

"Offensive, and not defensive," said I. "The war must be carried into the enemy's country. I am tired of having to tell people time and time again why we are not Christians. I will try to make them comprehend that they, as rational beings, have no right to accept the Christian dogma."

We agreed, and I wrote for the *Occident* a series of critical articles on the New Testament, with particular reference to the Westminster Confession. The articles aroused attention, but they cost me my standing in the esteem of the orthodox believers. I attacked Christianity critically from the rationalistic standpoint; hence I had to administer orthodox Judaism almost as many blows as orthodox Christianity. Miracles were not wonderful nor marvelous for me, and the Messiah was dismissed as a poetical

fiction. The ascension of Jesus and the ascension of Elijah were equally important, or, rather, equally unimportant for me; therefore the orthodox became bitterly incensed at me. The only one who, as far as I know, welcomed the articles, was Theodore Parker, who expressed his gratification publicly. My friends in Albany considered anything that I wrote good, and Chief-Justice Wood danced about like a mischievous boy with my articles in his hand, read them aloud to Streeter at least once a day to annoy him, and sent them to all his friends.

The effect of these articles was really abnormal. They aroused so much dread in Christian circles that the officers of the Synod forbade their learned secretary to answer me a second time, as he had done once before, which answer had elicited a sharp refutation from me. There was joy among the Jews at this decisive attack on Christianity; but even now these did not want to have anything to do with me. Several indignant preachers of Albany succeeded in inducing the governor to strike my name from the Library Committee, because this was a State office and I was no citizen; but this was only done *pro forma;* for I served thereafter as before. My Jewish enemies in Albany made capital of the affair in a wonderful manner. "See, he attacks even the *Tole.* He will make so much *Rishuth* that we will all receive *Gerush.*" The cowardly and malicious spoke in this manner. The most wonderful remark, however, was made by a certain person who violated all the canons of logic thus: "I have told you long ago that he

has the *Tole* on the brain. Any one who writes in that way must think necessarily of the *Tole* day and night. He will *shmad* himself, and you too."

I could but laugh at all this; even though it contributed towards stirring up the people against me, and I did nothing to propitiate them. I sat and read and dreamed; I went to the libraries, the literary society, the choir, the school, the synagogue, and home again, without seeking friendships or placating enmities.

An armistice was declared in the summer of 1849; for the cholera broke out and spread fear and dread. There were scarcely any cases of cholera among the Jews. Only one member of our congregation was stricken, but he recovered. I permitted the Odd Fellows to assign too great a share of the work to me, more than my weakened constitution could stand. On account of the epidemic I had to discontinue my baths; and upon the advice of my house friend and physician I drank more brandy than was good for my nervous system. The evil effects followed. As long as the epidemic lasted, I was in a state of continual agitation, and did not notice how my chest trouble grew worse and worse. One Friday night, when the cholera epidemic was almost at an end, my youngest child, Laura, a little angel, two years old, took sick, and died of cholera infantum Saturday noon. The grief at the loss of the dear little angel dazed me at first; and when I was myself again, I was as ill, exhausted, and downcast as I had been the year before. My cough grew worse and worse.

I had frequent attacks of hypochondria, and became entirely unfitted for society.

In addition, untoward events took place in my congregation, which discouraged me completely. At the funeral of my Laura, the "pious" members of the congregation wanted to cut the *Q'riah* for me. I repelled them, and forbade the women to even suggest this observance to my wife. People visited me after the funeral, but they did not find me sitting on the floor; further, my feet were shod in boots; in short, I observed none of the traditional mourning customs. This fanned the slumbering embers of the old quarrel into flame. During the fall holidays I was the subject of the most violent and bitter discussions on the street, in the saloons, at the gaming-table, at all of which my friends were exceedingly angered. In order to vex me as much as possible, signatures were solicited for a petition to the congregation to do away with the principal reforms, and to reintroduce the prayers containing the references to the personal Messiah. My friends had taken steps towards building a new synagogue. The subject was to be broached at the next congregational meeting. But this idea of building a new synagogue had to be relinquished because of the storm that was again brewing. Blattner and others had arrived at the conclusion that it was useless to try to accomplish anything in the *Bethel* congregation; and they assured me that, if I would speak the word, all my friends would secede from the congregation and form a new one. I did not wish to disrupt any congregation, and begged my friends to dismiss the

thought. The petition did not receive enough signatures to assure a majority vote, and was not presented to the congregation; but the opposition did not cease agitating, and I did not have the courage to deal a decisive blow. True, the presentiment of approaching death had left me, but in its place weariness of life often overcame me. I was sick, hypochondriacal, and surrounded by foes. The literary society also was threatened with dissolution, and I had to take it into my own house in December, 1849. Here it recovered soon, and acquired a new home. Besides, I devoted myself also to the study of law. I wanted to become a lawyer as quickly as possible in order to protect my family against future eventualities. I worked like one possessed. I studied frequently till two o'clock in the morning. My wife scolded and cried, but I could not respect her wishes. "I must remain a free man, come what may," I said to myself often. I wrote also for several newspapers and gave private lessons in order to support my family decently.

In February, 1850, my physician grew alarmed; for I coughed terribly. "You must go South for several weeks," said he. The Board gave me leave of absence, and I started on my journey in the beginning of February. This journey was the turning-point of my career.

There was at that time no direct railroad connection between Albany and New York. The traveler had to go eastward first *via* the Boston Road, then southward to Bridgeport *via* the Housatonic Road, and from there to New York by steamer.

It took generally from sixteen to eighteen hours to make the trip in case the Hudson was frozen over. This was the case during four or five months of every year. I traveled then for sixteen hours to New York; that is, I had nothing to do for sixteen hours. This had not happened to me for years. The whole past passed before me involuntarily. It stood out as clearly defined as a groove. With what high hopes I had traveled up the Hudson not quite four years before! How disappointed and discouraged I was now, traveling back! I examined myself carefully in the mirror of my own consciousness, and saw in my mind's eye a man physically and mentally broken, without any prospects of improvement, without any hope for the future. The rough rails and the uncomfortable seat in the jostling car had made me so downhearted that I wished for a disastrous railroad wreck. Life is not worth living, thought I, and I began to growl at the existing order of things. "There is some mistake in the plan of creation, or else one would be able to drink food." This is the experience of all idealists and enthusiasts, thought I. In the morning of life they go forth into the beautiful world with their hearts full of glowing love, their souls filled with great plans, their imaginations teeming with air-castles. They embrace the world with burning love; their hearts beat high with the thought of the noble deeds they will accomplish. Poor dreamers! At night they return home weary, downcast, deceived, and rejected. They imagined that rocks had souls, but they found therein only petrified corpses. Why has Providence created these

idealists and enthusiasts to their own hurt? Why has it destined its noblest work to suffer pain and disappointment? O Job, Job, thy plaints are justified, and the answer which was given thee is as good as none!

Thus I dreamed, mused, and rebelled for nine hours from Albany to Bridgeport, without taking a bite or speaking to a soul. Although railroad accidents were not rare in those days, we reached Bridgeport in safety, and immediately boarded the steamer, which sped through the smooth waters quickly and quietly. The motion, being different, was very pleasant. I took supper, smoked a cigar, and viewed the clear waters lying so calmly below me. Then I gazed at the beautiful blue sky above me, spangled with the stars so full of mystery, moving in their orbits so noiselessly. And it occurred to me that I was a naughty child which wanted everything it could not have, and which imagined that it understood everything better than its teacher and master. I bethought myself, banished the feeling of despondency, and arrived at New York cheerful and bright.

Upon my arrival at New York, I went at once to Dr. Lilienthal, partly to speak with him and partly to pass a pleasant hour in the company of his wife and sister, of both of whom I was very fond. I did the latter first, and in the course of conversation I learned from Dr. Lilienthal how shamefully he had been treated by Dr. Raphall, who had recently arrived from England. Lilienthal had been courteous enough to call upon the new arrival, and had asked

him what had induced him to leave England to come to America. Raphall, in answer, quoted the words of one of the ancient rabbis, "Where there are no men, strive thou to be a man." Dr. Lilienthal excused himself after receiving this compliment.

"Ah! well, my dear sir," thought I, "I shall pay you in the same coin if ever I have the opportunity." This thing occurs frequently that people come from Europe to this country with the idea that their like has never been known, that they need only come, and they will conquer at once and be enveloped in the smoke of incense. "America is a humbug. I am the great I am; hence I am the hero of the hour."

During the course of our conversation, Lilienthal informed me of his mournful experiences, and imparted to me his purpose of renouncing the ministry altogether and devoting himself entirely to the education of the young. This loosened my tongue, and I told him my troubles. "There is no help for you," said my friend, who was really well-disposed towards me. "If you want to be the Christ, you must expect to be crucified. I will not. I shall do something else for a living."

This would have been a good lesson for me, if I had had the power to use it to good effect. I wrote these words in my diary, and have read them frequently, and have thought time and again how true and sensible they are.

I left for Philadelphia the next morning, to visit Isaac Leeser. He invited me to supper. I found that he boarded in a Christian house. When I called

his attention to this inconsistency, that he, the orthodox *chazan*, preacher, and leader, lodged and ate in a Christian house, even though he partook of no meats, he confided his troubles to me, saying, in conclusion, that he expected to lose his position. "I see that every one has his burdens to bear," I mused, as Leeser continued complainingly and informed me that Judaism in America was going backwards constantly. He offered in proof of his assertion the fact that the reform congregations in New York, Baltimore, and Charleston were making marked progress. "And you say this to me?" I retorted. "Certainly," he answered, "you with your reform ideas stand on historical ground, but those others are innovators without principles." "Views differ indeed," thought I. "At home they look upon me as the worst of all, and this man thinks there are others still worse than I am." I appreciated the compliment. Leeser then told me of his purpose to translate the whole Bible into English. He read me some specimen pages. An interesting conversation, which convinced me of Leeser's scant knowledge of the sources, ensued. "Why do you not procure copies of Cahn's French and Philippson's German Bibles?" I asked. "They are reformers. I will have nothing to do with them," was the answer. I now explained to him that Cahn had developed reform ideas only in his introductions, and that Philippson's work might be called, not only orthodox, but hyper-orthodox. Leeser bought these books. Philippson considered it a very high compliment that Leeser made use of his Bible; but he gave

me, who had been instrumental in effecting this, a blow whenever he could. In truth, the German Jewish journalists, with few exceptions, have always treated me shamefully.

In the further course of the conversation I discovered that Raphall had treated Leeser as curtly as he had Lilienthal, and that his presence in America was not very agreeable to him. I was acquainted with Raphall's literary productions. I knew also that he was an excellent pulpiteer. Leeser informed me further that Raphall's six lectures on Hebrew poetry had attracted much attention, and I readily understood that this was unpleasant for Leeser, since he did not wish to be number two in the orthodox camp. Leeser said in an off-hand way: "Raphall is lecturing in Richmond at present. From there he will go to Charleston to lecture and to champion the cause of the orthodox congregation." I understood very well that he wanted to send me to Charleston to oppose Raphall; but I directed the conversation into another channel. Before my departure, late that night, I informed him that I intended to spend ten or twelve days in Washington, and that I might then go to Charleston if a favorable opportunity presented itself. Leeser furnished me at once with the addresses of the prominent members of the reform congregation of Charleston. He assured me that the people at Charleston would learn where I could be found in Washington, and made me promise him to send him my first lecture if I should speak there or elsewhere.

I left for Washington the next morning. The period of storm and stress of the Republic began in the spring of 1849, with the famous six-hour speech of Calhoun, of South Carolina, in the Senate. The territories acquired in the Mexican War, including California, which was of such great importance at that time, were the bone of contention between the North and the South. California had fulfilled the conditions, and demanded to be admitted as a free State. The slave-owners insisted upon their right to emigrate to California or any other territory of the United States with their negroes, and to be protected in their rights. The opponents of the slave-power denied this emphatically. The case was of such vital import, because the balance of power of slave and free States would be disturbed by the admission of California as a free State. By this the free States would have a majority of two in the Senate. The situation was highly critical. Both sides were greatly excited, the leaders inexorable, and the rebellion of 1860-61 threatened to break forth even then. The slavery question was debated thoroughly in Congress, the natural right to possess slaves, if there be such a right, and the Constitutional guarantees for the protection of the slaveholder, as well as the political issues involved, were discussed from every standpoint. Calhoun set the ball rolling in 1849 with the six-hour speech already mentioned, which developed the following principle with masterly logic: Freedom is an acquired and not an inborn right. Right is that which the State recognizes as such. The negro never acquired and never possessed

freedom. The State recognizes negro slavery as right. Therefore all territories of the United States must be opened to slavery. William H. Seward took the opposite stand. He held that man was born free, and if the State sanctioned slavery, it did wrong. There is a higher right than the power of the State, to which he appealed against the extension of slavery. The political mediators stood between these two extremes, among them Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Lewis Cass, Stephen A. Douglas. Webster argued from the standpoint of States' rights, the others from the standpoint of compromise. These mighty spirits clashed in the Senate, and dangerous sparks flew. The compromise measures advocated by the Government and Henry Clay had failed of adoption, and the Cass-Douglas Compromise Bill, also called the Omnibus Bill, was before the Senate. This bill provided for the admission of California as a free State, recommended that the Missouri line of division between slave and free States be extended to the Pacific, and included a number of other germane matters. I concluded to remain in Washington till the question was settled, since I wanted to listen to the interesting speeches and debates in the Senate.

I hied myself to the Capitol and Senate gallery immediately upon my arrival in Washington, without having taken time to change my clothes. The Great Sanhedrin made a deep impression upon me; the earnest, serious, prominent men of national fame sat there in council, wrapped in a dignity that commanded respect. The many hoary crowns, the

finely-developed heads, the intelligent, clear-cut features, the calm bearing, combined to form a remarkable picture, which I still see in my mind's eye. I occupied my seat in the gallery eight full days, remaining often till midnight, as long as the Senate was in session. I was the first visitor to come and the last to leave, and listened with undivided attention to the greatest speeches of the greatest statesmen of that time. Calhoun lay on his death-bed at his hotel. I visited him shortly before his demise, and heard the speech which he dictated on his death-bed read in the Senate. I heard all the other celebrities of that day, and formed the personal acquaintance of most of them. I felt the truth of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul while I listened to the powerful and eloquent words of these aged, gray-headed intellectual giants, many of whom stood with one foot in the grave. Sickness, cough, and hypochondria had disappeared; the past was forgotten. I lived a new life, or, rather, I dreamed a new dream, and my imagination soared to other heights, and disported itself in new fields.

I visited William H. Seward on the first morning of my arrival in Washington. He received me like an old friend, and declared his readiness to render me any service or favor. I had heard and seen enough to know that the all-important matters before the Senate required all his time and attention, because, with the exception of Senator Hale, he had no ally, and was attacked from all sides. I had also heard that it was necessary that he, the anti-

slavery apostle, should expose himself publicly as little as possible in a city of strong pro-slavery sympathies; for not every fanatic could be guarded against. I therefore declined his kind offer with thanks, and only asked the privilege of visiting him occasionally and being introduced by him to prominent personages. "Let us begin at once with this," said he. After changing his clothes, he invited me to walk with him. He offered me his arm, walked with me from the hotel to the White House, chatted in the most cordial manner imaginable, as though there were affairs of import to be discussed between us, stopped still several times, called my attention to various buildings, took me through the Treasury Building, and then to the White House into the presence of the President. This was enough, and more than enough. By the following evening I was heralded throughout Washington as a notorious celebrity and as one of Seward's adherents, who, by the way, did not enjoy the greatest popularity.

General Zachary Taylor was President; Fillmore, Vice-President. Seward wanted me to see "Old Zach." Upon entering the White House, we encountered a negro, clad in black, dumb as a statue. "Where is the President?" Without turning around or uttering a word, the negro pointed backwards to the staircase. We ascended the stairs. Seward knocked at a door; a voice within bade us enter. A fire was burning in the grate opposite the door, chairs stood on both sides, and a man sat in front of the fire, with his back to the door. Without turning around to see who it might be, he called out,

"Step up closer, gentlemen; it is cold to-day." We took our positions on either side of the grate, and I knew now that I was standing before the President. "Mr. President, I have the honor of introducing to you my friend from Albany," said Seward. The President extended his hand, and asked us to be seated. After catechising me in true American fashion, he said, "I suppose you have never seen a President of the United States, and for that reason you have paid me a visit." "I beg pardon, Your Excellency," said I; "I had the honor of speaking with your predecessor, James K. Polk. My object in coming has been to see the hero of Buena Vista." Hereupon the old war-horse arose and bowed graciously. "Mr. Seward," said he, "your friend seems to be very polite." The old man became so talkative that I ventured to say the following: "Your Excellency, it has afforded me the keenest pleasure to form the acquaintance of the hero-President—a unique and magnificent personality. Permit me, however, to say that I believe you have never seen a person of my kind." He looked at me dumfounded. "I have seen people of all sorts and conditions," said he, "and would like to know what you mean." "Certainly," said I, "I am a rabbi." "You are right; I have never seen a rabbi." He now extended his hand a second time, and began the conversation anew. Seward, however, had to leave, and politeness demanded that I leave with him. All the Washington papers reported the visit the next morning under the caption, "The First Rabbi to Visit a

President." The simple incident was made much of and given the widest publicity.

Mr. Schoolcraft, our representative in Congress from Albany, an old Quaker bachelor, met us on our way from the White House to the Capitol. He informed Seward that Daniel Webster was ill, and would not appear in the Senate chamber that morning. "Does he receive visitors?" I asked. "Yes, indeed; he will be happy to have company." "May I ask you to introduce me to him?" Schoolcraft and I now called on Webster, whom we found sick abed. Schoolcraft introduced me. "Please repeat the name." Schoolcraft did so. "I have heard the name. I must know you. Whence do I know you?" I grew embarrassed; for I had never seen him, and had no reputation through which Webster might have heard of me. "I am sure I do not know, unless you have been in Albany, Mr. Senator," I stammered in my embarrassment. "Ah! yes, quite right; now I remember," said Webster, relieving me of my embarrassment. "I spent a Sunday in Albany last fall with Amos Dean, and he spoke to me about you. I asked him for something new to read, and he handed me your manuscript on Herbart's psychology. I read it through on my journey hither." He opened his desk, brought forth the manuscript, and showed it to me. "I would like to talk over certain things with you. Come and dine with me. You also, friend Schoolcraft. Don't be late. And now I must beg you to excuse me, gentlemen; my physician forbids me to exert myself."

We arrived at Webster's at eight o'clock in the evening. He began to speak of the manuscript at table, and immediately thereafter I accompanied him to his room, where he showed me that Amos Dean had made corrections in my essay. Webster said that they were only stylistic improvements. After setting forth his relation to the Unitarian Church and the Boston University, he gave me one of his unpublished addresses to read, and added in a friendly tone, "If you should like a position in our college, I will gladly be of assistance to you."

I left Webster late at night, a different person, utterly changed and metamorphosed. I read the unpublished address on natural right that same night. It was an opening address delivered before the law class. I wrote in my diary: "Webster is a grand man. His voice is powerful and well modulated; his face is good, kindly, and handsome. There is fire in his glance. Sublimity sits on his brow. He is well balanced throughout." Upon visiting Seward the next morning, I told him what Webster had said to me. "I have mentioned to Seymour and Dr. Beck a number of times," rejoined Seward, "that they should call you to a chair in our college; but they do no more than they must. But if you wish such a position, it will not prove difficult to procure it for you, and then you can continue to remain in the State of New York."

It need not be said that I felt much encouraged and uplifted by these and similar utterances. This mood was intensified upon my being introduced the

following evening by Seward to the Austrian ambassador, Chevalier Hulsemann. Although I was introduced to him as a fugitive countryman, he received me none the less cordially, entered into conversation with me, and offered cigars, wine, and cakes as refreshments. Although I owed this special mark of attention to Seward, yet I could not help thinking as follows: "If an ordinary rabbi from the country, without reputation and influence, would be received in this manner in the capital city of Austria by the foremost personages, the newspapers would talk about it for months; all Jewry would be carried away with enthusiasm, and the rabbi's fortune would be made." My sojourn in Washington exerted an Americanizing influence upon me on this very account. I felt that I was one of the American people, although I had not yet been naturalized, and from that time I said "we," "us," and "our" quite unconsciously whenever I spoke of American affairs. I felt greatly uplifted and aroused by this intercourse with the greatest spirits of the country and the kindly reception wherewith I met. The intellectual eight-day combat that I witnessed in the Senate stirred me mightily, enlarged my horizon, refreshed my mind, and taught me what was needed to become an English orator. I have never neglected an opportunity since then to go to Washington and form the acquaintance of the leading men of the Nation. These have been my best teachers and my most instructive reading. If anybody desires to know how it happens that I have always

moved on the lofty platform of humanity, and have always set in motion broad and inclusive projects, even though they have not been great—and God knows I have never concerned myself with trivialities—I would answer him that I learned this from our national politicians and statesmen, with whom I much preferred to associate than with learned professors.

VII

I HAD not been in Washington many days before I received an official invitation from the reformed congregation in Charleston, in which my attention was called particularly to Dr. Raphall's attacks on the reform movement. I telegraphed my acceptance of the invitation, and after the Senate had come to a vote I prepared for the journey. The result of the vote was announced in the Senate at one o'clock; the Omnibus Bill had passed; at two o'clock I was on board the steamer that went down the Potomac to Aquia Creek. Thence we went by train through Virginia and North Carolina to Wilmington, and here again embarked on a steamer bound for Charleston. The trip from Washington to Charleston took thirty hours in those days.

I had thirty hours to myself, with nothing to do but give free rein to my thoughts. It occurred to me now for the first time that I was not sick any more. Hence my illness had been imaginary. I recalled vividly all the reports which I had read or heard of experiments of the power of imagination over the body, and was finally convinced that the depressing influence to which I had been exposed for four years must have misled my imagination into crooked byways, and I resolved to fetter and to rule despotically this ape of the intellect which had played

these sorry tricks upon me. "I will or I will not, shall be my determining principle from now on," I resolved. I wrote this in my diary, and have been true to this resolution ever since. "Whoever is not an Ego does not exist, and he only is an Ego who has a will ruled by reason," are the words which I wrote in my diary. I wrote the sermon, "Bible Theology," on the steamer between Wilmington and Charleston. This sermon, in which, to my great astonishment, I later found this whole train of thought that I have just jotted down reproduced, was published in the *Occident*. I claimed that the theology of the Bible rested on the basis of an Almighty Will, ruled by reason (I was a thorough-going rationalist at that time), while I considered heathen theology the outcome of chance, the highly-colored result of imagination, without rhyme or reason, a fatalism of the fancy. I came to Charleston as though newly-borr, like one who, awakening to active consciousness from a long, distressing dream, recognized that it was all a dream. However, new experiences, seemingly providential, awaited me in Charleston. These spurred me on mightily to action, and demanded a firm stand on my part.

A committee met me at the steamer. Among others, Dr. Roderigos and Mr. Poznanski, the *chazan*, preacher and leader of the reform congregation, that consisted of Americans of Portuguese descent, were members of this committee. The stiff formality of the reception was objectionable to me, for Mr. P. welcomed me in a studied address; but I was rather vexed when Mr. P. said to me while riding in the

carriage: "We have invited you hither to defend our principles, and since these are possibly unknown to you, I place myself at your service to impart them to you." "Thanks, that is not necessary," I answered, quietly. "I have come to set forth my principles." "In truth, you are the man for Charleston," exclaimed Dr. Roderigos, extending his hand to me, and pressing mine warmly so that I began to feel at home. I was domiciled in splendid rooms. A negro was placed at my disposal. I was the guest of American aristocrats for the first time in my life; for there was but one German in the whole congregation, the members of which were influential merchants, bankers, lawyers, physicians, authors, politicians, public officials, most of them rich, and descended from old Portuguese families. Proud were they of their descent and their civic standing. They were people of culture and refinement. The most prominent members of the congregation visited me within the course of a few hours, and I perceived at once that my surroundings were entirely different from what they had been hitherto. Mr. Poznanski continued to patronize me in the most amiable and condescending manner. He even explained to me, who found it difficult to sit quiet for one minute, that it was good form to sit with folded hands in society. He also told me, who had nothing to conceal, and hence always spoke as I thought, that one must speak slowly and deliberately; in short, he wished to fashion me according to the Charleston pattern. I listened to him without laughing and without showing any impatience, until he ventured to suggest that I read him

my sermon for fear lest there be some Germanisms in it. "If there are, you would substitute Polisms for them," said I. "I speak German better than you do, and write a better English than you will ever speak." Thus ended the first act of the drama. Poznanski undoubtedly thought that I was an ill-mannered boor, who would not take any advice. He put a good face on the matter, so that we always treated one another cordially, although he was rich and proud, and blessed with a goodly share of self-consciousness.

The magnificent temple was filled Saturday morning with fine gentlemen and ladies, Jews and Christians, the sons and daughters of the first families; even a colonel and his granddaughters sang in the choir. There was an air of aristocracy prevalent; all, too, were Americans to the core. And here was I, poor wretch, the only German in the whole assembly. I, who was not yet four years in the country, was to give satisfaction as a speaker to these people! The more I perceived that the eyes of all were fixed on me, the more terrified I grew, particularly because I was conscious of all my weaknesses, having just heard so many orators in Washington. If I could have retreated with honor, I would have done so very quickly. If I should be attacked by nose-bleed, coughing, asthma, or something else of that kind, thought I, the matter would be only postponed. Therefore be brave; the world belongs to him who dares. It must be done; therefore let it be done quickly. I would in all likelihood have hesitated long, had not Poznanski had the splendid idea of introducing me in a well-memorized speech. When I heard him

speak, the old feeling of pride and the consciousness of power reawoke in me. I was myself again, and looked at the public with the self-conscious feeling, "I am your teacher and master; I speak and you listen." This indeed took place. I spoke, and the congregation listened attentively. The sermon appeared in the *Occident*.

At the close of the service congratulations, compliments, invitations, were heaped upon me. The ladies—yes, the many beautiful ladies—showered polite speeches upon me. There was a grand dinner at the house of the *parnass*. After that I was surrounded by a circle of ladies in the drawing-room, who employed all manner of feminine wiles to attract my attention. It was as though we were in paradise. I grew solicitous for the little common sense that was still mine. A Jewish editor entered the drawing-room in the nick of time, and said that he had just come from the orthodox synagogue, that Dr. Raphall had inveighed against my sermon, and had completely demolished the reform movement. At this moment the real reason for my coming to Charleston occurred to me. "Will Dr. Raphall publish his address?" I asked the editor. "No, he refused distinctly to do so," answered he; "but I jotted down the contents of his address." The *parnass* gave me a hint. I excused myself, and stepped into the adjoining room with him. The editor followed, and read the address to us. The ball was now set rolling. We preached and inveighed against one another. One or the other of us spoke in public nearly every day, in order to weaken the arguments of his

opponent, and we each had large audiences. The affair aroused quite a sensation, so that even a number of Christians of ability were drawn into and participated actively in it. We were both invited to spend the evening of *Purim* in the house of a prominent patrician. We became acquainted, and even intimate. Dr. Raphall said to me at a late hour, in a cordial and friendly tone of voice: "You are young, you have a great future before you; but you have ranged yourself on the wrong side, for reform has no future in America. If you retrace your steps, you will be able to render Judaism great service; but from your present standpoint you will undermine and destroy it and yourself."

"I stand where my convictions place me," I answered. "Any other standpoint is simply out of the question as far as I am concerned. But, Doctor, God willing, we will see within ten or twenty years what will be left in America of Jewish orthodoxy."

I went home, wrote Raphall's words in my diary, and pondered upon them. "Perhaps the old man is right," I soliloquized; "the condition of American Judaism is precisely what he claims. Have I the power to destroy this antiquated, ingrained, deep-rooted conception, and substitute something better for it? Am I not entirely alone and solitary; alone in the presence of this colossus? Am I called, am I competent to carry the fight to a successful outcome?" I could not sleep that night. On the one hand, my conscience troubled me. Why shall I disturb the people in their religious convictions? On the other hand, the impulse to progress left me no

peace. Here I thought of Seward. He, too, stands alone, thought I. *One* must take up the fight and stand alone; the others will follow. In this manner I passed the night in torment, until finally Poznanski came early in the morning and asked the burning question, "Can you read Greek and Latin?" I thought he had gone daft, and was about to break forth into objurgations, when the thought occurred to me that we were in Charleston, and hence it was incumbent upon me to be particularly polite. When he noticed my astonishment, he explained the reason of his question. He said that he intended to resign his position, and the congregation had resolved to appoint a preacher of classical attainments. He knew also that I would be elected unanimously, and only desired to be able to inform the Board of Trustees that I had enjoyed a classical education. "I read neither Greek nor Latin," was all the answer he could elicit from me. "But have you no testimonials; they would do just as well," he continued. "I have burnt all such trash," was my reply. He continued so insistently that I lost all patience. Poznanski was more sensible than I; he did not grow angry with me, and the battle between Raphall and myself continued merrily. A Christian lawyer who had followed the controversy closely, gave the following opinion: "Raphall expresses himself beautifully; Wise has the power of conviction." This was the general verdict.

But the controversy was to have a lamentable ending. Raphall and Poznanski had determined to hold a public debate, in which the one was to try to convince the other. This was decided upon before my

arrival in Charleston. This was a foolish and purposeless procedure; but it had been resolved upon, time and place had been fixed, the public was on the *qui vive*, and the comedy had to be enacted. The doughty champions appeared on the appointed day. A long table stood in the upper part of the hall. On it lay the folios to be used in the fray. Dr. Raphall, a rotund little man with a black velvet skullcap on his head, sat at the head of the table, and next to him Mr. Poznanski in full dress, stiff, cold, and self-satisfied. The *chazan* and the officers of the orthodox congregation sat at Raphall's side, while the officers of the reform congregation, with myself at the head, sat at Poznanski's side. The house was crowded with the adherents of both parties. I had gone thither with the firm resolution not to laugh, happen what would, although the whole affair seemed to me most laughable and ridiculous. During the course of the debate I wrote a German poem, which I refrained from publishing because I did not wish to encroach on Heine's preserves. Poznanski had read the proceedings of the rabbinical conferences, and the writings of Jost, Geiger, Zunz, Holdheim, Solomon, Kley, and Mannheimer; besides, he still retained some Talmudical reminiscences from his early youth. Raphall ignored the German literature, and referred exclusively to the rabbinical codex of Maimonides. Poznanski cited Albo. But beyond this there was no reference to literature. When I noticed that Raphall had dog's-eared his *Rambam* in order to find his citations readily, I opined that he was not particularly *au fait* with the contents, and when he began

to murder Talmudical passages, I began to grow angry; but I held my peace. Two persons who knew the rabbinical literature only from secondary sources were debating dogmatic questions. No principle of procedure was established; no judges had been appointed. The debate was a kind of *pilpul* in a new form, but without basis. No especial acumen was displayed. Raphall was being worsted, for Poznanski was a skilled dialectician, and remained calm; while Raphall grew excited, and declaimed violently. Finally Raphall grew angry, and glowed with holy zeal. Instead of arguing, he began to catechise. He asked the public, and finally myself personally: "Do you believe in the personal Messiah? Do you believe in the bodily resurrection?" I have never refused to answer a direct question; therefore I answered Raphall's question with a loud and decisive No! This ended the drama. Raphall seized his books, rushed angrily out of the hall, followed by his whole party. He had apparently given up the fight. The reform party was satisfied with the result; the whole affair appeared ridiculous to me. Raphall departed at the end of that week. I preached on the following Sabbath, and left in the evening for New York by steamer, for I wished to take an ocean trip.

I left Charleston in perfect health, thoroughly Americanized, and fully convinced that I was an English orator who could please and satisfy a cultured audience. I had gained a large circle of new friends, among whom were men and women of considerable influence. I felt exalted, vivacious, and energetic. I was ready to engage in new struggles, and looked

hopefully towards the future. The old optimism again took possession of me, and the world was all rose-colored. How happy are we mortals who know not what the future has in store for us! If I had had the least inkling of what the near future was to bring forth, I would not have enjoyed the present hour so fully. In my ignorance I was thoroughly happy while on the ocean, and painted the future as I wished it to be.

Upon my arrival at New York I hastened home to my dear ones, and was received with open arms, especially because I had brought for my wife, as a present, material for a new silk dress, and that, too, of the latest pattern. The women persisted in the foolish declaration that I had suddenly become handsome and amiable, and demanded my photograph. My wife wanted to wed me over again, although I told her that it was dangerous to trust too much.* My school-children wanted to crown me with a garland; but the flowers were not in bloom, and I had to rest content with their blooming, glowing faces. My friends in the library gave me a banquet, and took advantage of the opportunity to consume oysters, champagne, and bananas in as great quantities as possible decently. But this could not last. A few days later I received the following telegram from Charleston: "You have been elected unanimously rabbi of our congregation at a salary of one thousand dollars, with furnished home, etc." I was much taken

* The clever play on the word "trauen," which means both "to wed" and "to trust," can not be reproduced in the English translation.—[ED.

with Charleston. I liked the congregation, with its reforms and its firm principles. The city and its inhabitants, so refined and cultured, pleased me, as well as the not inconsiderable library. The call was most welcome to me, especially as I recognized that all congregational bickerings would now be ended, and that I would be able to live in peace among people of similar convictions and of the same grade of culture. The position was very prominent and honorable. I described all this vividly to my wife, who without further ado gave her consent. I telegraphed my acceptance to Charleston, and upon receiving the official notification with the accompanying papers a few days later, I handed in my resignation to the Board of Trustees of the *Bethel* congregation. This was the signal for a new outbreak. My friends held that I had done right, and declared that I was under no obligations to the congregation after the treatment I had received at its hands. But my opponents re-enacted the old comedy. Meetings were held, resolutions were passed, committees of men, committees of women, committees of children, were sent to me, golden promises were made; but I insisted on my resignation, and the position was advertised. Candidates came and preached, but how? I was pestered by new deputations after every trial sermon, until finally my friends also tried to persuade me to remain. Only one, Jacob Cohn, advised me to leave; for said he, "No lasting peace can be concluded with these people; the old disputes will break out again in a few weeks." The others declared, "If

you leave Albany, Judaism and reform will receive a death-blow, for your friends will take no more interest in the congregation nor in Judaism." I was overwhelmed with the bitterest reproaches. Finally they told my wife that the yellow-fever raged in Charleston very frequently, and that the city was very unhealthy. My wife and my relations were now also arrayed against me. I stood alone in my resolution to go, and had to relinquish it. I finally acquiesced in the folly and the wrong of remaining, and permitted myself to be re-elected in Albany for three years. The joy was great; feasts of reconciliation were celebrated; I was overwhelmed with costly gifts; the heavens were without a cloud. I could, however, not rejoice, because I knew that I had acted foolishly and wrongly. In this mood I wrote the letter of declination to Charleston. This was received in ill part there; but the step was irrevocable. At the same time Moses Schloss removed from Albany to St. Louis with his family. I thus lost a strong supporter. Louis Spanier was elected *parnass* during the confusion. He later became my bitterest opponent.

Shortly after my re-election in Albany the following bull of excommunication, signed by Dr. Raphall and the officers of the orthodox congregation of Charleston, appeared in the columns of the *Occident:* "Since Wise declared publicly and decidedly in Charleston that he does not believe in the personal Messiah nor in the bodily resurrection, he is no longer fit to act as rabbi or religious teacher of a

Jewish congregation, and hence he should be removed from his post in Albany as soon as possible." At first I laughed at the presumptuous, mediæval, nonsensical document, since my beliefs were no secret in Albany, nor had it ever occurred to me to conceal them. But I was soon to learn otherwise. Dr. Raphall had in the meantime been elected rabbi in New York, and was by all odds the most influential and prominent man on the orthodox side. His word carried much more weight than I had any idea of at the start. Besides, there had appeared in New York for some time past a Jewish weekly, called *The Asmonean*. The publisher was an English orthodox Jew, who, though not an ignoramus, yet knew little or nothing about Judaism, and was glad to receive contributions for his paper from any one. My opponents, under Raphall's leadership, obtained possession of this organ, and abused me week after week in the most outrageous manner. Happily the paper was not widely read, and the writers were very ignorant and unskilled. Such was my plight. There was not one person in America who wrote a line in my favor or in the cause of reform, however much noise the opponents made, and however much they denounced the reform movement. The orthodox alone had the public ear. I noted with astonishment the laziness and the cowardice of loud-mouthed talkers, who had not the courage to appear in public, although they coquetted with reform at home and pretended to be on the side of progress. I wrote to Leeser; but he gave me to understand that articles against Raphall,

such as I would have to write, would jeopardize the very existence of his magazine. He struck out half of my articles, so that I was forced to stop writing for him, and I would not write for the *Asmonean*. I was compelled to quit the field temporarily; but I would have found other ways and means to appear before the public had not the fight broken out in Albany with renewed violence.

VIII

THE man who had been chosen president at the last election, Louis Spanier, had been one of my friends for years. He had been a member of the other congregation, but had joined the Bethel congregation because of his sympathy with the reforms that had been adopted. We visited one another frequently, and were on very good terms. He was a man of culture and imposing presence, aristocratic, dignified, precise, and cautious. He held little intercourse with Jews, and visited no one except myself. He was a native of Hanover. His wife was the sister of the district rabbi, Dr. Mayer, of that country. This man, who had himself urged that I remain in Albany, became my opponent all at once, without my being able to discover the reasons for his sudden change of heart. He took sides not only against me (this I might have forgiven him readily), but against the cause of reform. He entered into close alliance with all my enemies, contact with whom he formerly avoided, and combined all opposing elements into an anti-reform party, which purposed to revoke all reforms and reintroduce the old state of affairs with all its disorders. Naturally all this was done with the object of vexing me. It is difficult to say what turned this man against me so suddenly. It is however quite certain that Raphall's bull of excommunication and

his defamatory articles that followed in its wake were given as the ostensible reasons. The flame was fanned, not alone by the orthodox party in New York, but also in Charleston, where Spanier had a brother-in-law who had married into a rich and fanatical family. The movement against me was encouraged with holy zeal from various quarters. Its object was, of course, my removal from office. Louis Spanier seems to have been merely the tool of a general conspiracy of the orthodox leaders against me, and his partisans in Albany were blinded followers who were to render a dangerous opponent of orthodoxy harmless. The secret springs of that agitation have never been brought to light.

Immediately after the confirmation on *Shabuoth*, Spanier gave expression to his opposition to the doctrines confessed by the confirmees. I was surprised at this; but I thought that, *parnassim* fashion, he wanted to air his importance, and regarded the matter with indifference. Shortly after this I heard that our *chazan* visited the saloons, drank and played cards as formerly, although he had promised not to do so any more, and had been appointed as an assistant teacher in my school on the strength of that promise. I knew that the *chazan* was weak, and that he would never have taken this step, which might have cost him his position, except at the instigation of some one in power. I recognized at once that the object was to pick a quarrel with me through the *chazan*. But since I did not wish any annoyance, I informed the *parnass* that the *chazan* had broken his promise; hence

was not fit, according to Jewish regulations, to be either *chazan* or *shochet* until he mended his ways. I also remarked that I had no desire, as far as I was concerned, to refer to the authority of the rabbinical code, nor to be guided strictly by it in this case, although the *chazan* would have to give up frequenting saloons on account of his family, if for no other reason. Spanier now had me show him the paragraphs of the code in question, reprimanded the *chazan* mildly, and things remained *in statu quo*. On the following Sabbath, when I came to the synagogue, I found that my official regalia had disappeared, and no one knew what had become of it. I preached in citizen clothes, and everything passed off smoothly. My friends had a new gown made for me during the following week, but were much incensed at the scurvy trick that had been played on me. I understood it, but pretended not to, and insisted that the articles had been stolen. Thus far all the differences remained *entre nous*. But it was not long before there was a public rupture.

There was an established rule to the effect that no member of the Board should in any way desecrate the Sabbath. One of them opened his store one Sabbath-day. I went to him, explained to him how difficult it was to reintroduce the observance of the Sabbath in this country, and begged him not to set a bad example. He would not listen to me. I requested him to resign his office as a member of the Board if he did not intend to observe the Sabbath. He answered me curtly. Since there was some ex-

pectation that I would ventilate the matter in the pulpit, the pious orthodox element proceeded in the following ridiculous fashion:

During the services on Sabbath morning the *parnass* sent the sexton to me with the message *ex-officio*, "The *parnass* serves notice on you not to preach to-day." I understood the declaration of war and the arbitrary assumption of power, and retorted briefly, "I shall preach to-day." I stepped to the pulpit at the regular time as the choir finished its hymn. The *parnass* now arose in front of me, and said threateningly, "I tell you, you shall not preach to-day." I paid no attention to him, and began to speak in a loud voice, which thoroughly drowned the voice of the *parnass*, so that the people did not know why he was standing in front of me. He repeated his threat. I paid no attention to it, and continued to speak quietly. The *parnass* and a few of his adherents left the synagogue; but their action caused no disturbance. The public learned what had taken place only after the service was over. A petition addressed to Spanier, calling on him to resign, had no effect. A charge of disturbing divine service was brought against him in the police court. I was opposed to this. He was dismissed with a slight reprimand. He was given to understand, however, that, according to the laws of the State of New York, the divine service and the sermon were the concern of the preacher, and lay without the province of any congregational officer. The gage of battle had thus been publicly thrown, and both sides took it up. This action of the president against me was most disgraceful treachery, and in-

volved a complete betrayal of principle, for the cause of it all lay in my request to a member of the Board to observe the Sabbath, or else resign his office.

The next step in the war consisted in the refusal to pay my salary. Likewise the parents opposed to me would not pay the tuition fees, in spite of the fact that their children continued to attend my school. This made but little difference to me, for my credit was good and my wants were few. Matters, however, were going from bad to worse; for the opposing parties were growing more and more embittered, and peace negotiations were out of the question. The contest had gotten beyond me, and I could do only one of two things to avoid it, either give up my projects for reform or resign, neither of which my friends would permit. I was quite powerless, and altogether in the hands of my friends.

I did not neglect my official duties nor my studies for one moment while the storm was playing about my head. In addition to this, I was secretary of the Hungarian Society, which we had organized for the purpose of supporting fugitive Hungarians who arrived on these shores in great numbers at that time. Seward, Jr. (Frederick), was president; Thomas B. Marrow, treasurer; and I, secretary; *i. e.*, we three were the society; others were permitted to pay, attend the public meetings, and make great speeches. Neither Seward nor Marrow had the time to attend to the administration of the affairs of the organization; therefore I was the Hungarian Society, inasmuch as I had possession of the money, the books, the seal, the executive power, and the president. We

had the disposition of much money and many free railroad tickets; hence there was no lack of applicants. All strangers were Hungarian patriots, although not one in ten spoke Hungarian. Many noble Poles who had not died for Hungary came also. I was not very strict, gave to almost every one, and fitted out many young men as peddlers, who thereupon remained in the district. It must be observed that these young people knew no one besides myself, except two or three merchants from whom they bought goods, and their landlord. All other people in Albany were strangers to them. These young men, who became the singers in the choir, and members of the literary society, were my bodyguard, the public press of Albany my palladium, so that I was safe from public insults and attacks; but any other outrage was possible, owing to the heated fanaticism and blind partisanship.

My opponents were desirous of keeping within the law. They wanted to overthrow me by legal means. My resignation would not have satisfied them under existing circumstances. I must be vanquished and made harmless for all future time. A post-office official, who was well informed about the whole state of affairs, paid especial attention to Louis Spanier's mail. He noticed that in addition to his usual letters he received a surprisingly large number from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, and Charleston, the seat of genuine orthodoxy; also a not inconsiderable number from London and Hanover. I saw the addresses, and recognized the handwriting and the seal in a number of instances, so that

the gist of the matter became clear to me. I was therefore somewhat prepared for coming events.

Shortly after the events narrated above, written charges were preferred against me by a number of members, as follows:

1. That I had written on New-Year's eve in a lodge-room.

2. That I had ridiculed publicly the women's ritual bath.

3. That I preached a God of reason, while the congregation believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The *chazan* was the secretary of the congregation. He was ordered by the *parnass* to send me a copy of these charges with the seal of the congregation, accompanied with the demand that I defend myself. He fulfilled this duty in a revolting manner. He wrote to me in the old, rough, and despotic official style. In the evening I examined the books of the lodge which I had kept, and found that no meeting had taken place on New-Year's eve; hence charge number one was a lie. I knew very well that I never mocked women, that I always treated them with dignity and courtesy, and that I certainly never made sport of religious customs; hence charge number two must also be false. I could not understand charge number three. I did not know what was meant by it. I put the matter aside till the following morning, considered it carefully, and came to the conclusion that my opponents merely wanted an excuse to pick a quarrel with me, and I resolved that they should neither frighten nor

intimidate me. The following morning I paid the *chazan* what was due him, and dismissed him from my school. I wrote on the back of the bill of charges: "Points one and two are false. I do not understand the third. I shall not defend myself, and herewith return the document. Who hath appointed thee prince and judge?" and I sent the papers back to the *parnass*.

The presiding officer called a meeting of the Board at once. All the members appeared at the meeting. There were five. The charges, together with my answer, were laid before them. The *parnass* demanded satisfaction for the insult, and insisted that I be suspended from office until the matter be settled. After a stormy debate a vote was taken, with the result that only one member sided with the *parnass*, while three voted against him; viz., the vice-president, Joseph Sporberg, Maier Freund, and Maier Stern. Now Sporberg was as good a tactician as Spanier. He saw his advantage immediately, and moved that the charges be not sustained nor entered upon the minutes. This was carried by three votes to two, and the matter was settled. Louis Spanier would have probably resigned at the time, for he had suffered a signal defeat, had it not been for two incidents. Some young people hired a cart with a mule, and placed it in front of the synagogue for the use of the president. Upon his coming out of the meeting, the driver invited him to take a seat in the cart. The next thing that occurred was that a new bull of excommunication appeared in the *Asmonean* on the following Friday. I was accused in this of being

a deist, and my deposition was again insisted upon. I knew now what they meant by the God of reason, and knew further by whom the agitation against me was inspired. Spanier was incensed and bigoted; he was in the service of those who used him as a tool; he could not resign without betraying his allies.

My opponents now resorted to vulgar tittle-tattle. This angered my friends and my wife; but only amused me, because my whole life lay before the public like an open book. The summer of 1850 passed without bringing about any improvement in the state of affairs. Finally all the peddlers came home for the holidays. I knew that the troubles would now be repeated; that there would be contention, strife, and perhaps worse. A great fair happened to be held in the city during the week before New-Year. Business was good, and no one wished to leave his place of business. Spanier made use of the opportunity. Although the congregational meeting was always held after New-Year and at night, he called the meeting two days before New-Year and by day, in order that the business men could not attend it. And although the law required that the special business to be brought before the meeting should be indicated in the notices, he neglected to do this. The people attended the meeting nevertheless, because they divined trouble. Instead of proceeding with the regular business, the *parnass* laid the charges which had been brought against me, but had been dismissed by the Board, before the meeting. The debate on the subject lasted from three o'clock in the afternoon till eleven o'clock at night. Neither side would give in,

and the *parnass* refused persistently to put the motion for adjournment. Since this proceeding was clearly illegal, the vice-president, Joseph Sporberg, arose at eleven o'clock at night, and declared that it was his duty to vindicate the law, and he put the motion to adjourn. A vote was taken, and Sporberg decided that the motion was carried. He declared the meeting adjourned, and left with his friends. After they had gone, Spanier declared that the meeting was not adjourned, and proceeded to business. First, our poor, sick, and efficient sexton was discharged, because he was one of our party; then new officers were elected; then it was resolved that the charges against me were sustained, that I was deposed from office from that hour, and that the back-salary due me should not be paid. The orthodox party had thus won a complete victory, and I was defeated. The following morning I received from the secretary a copy of the proceedings in the same gruff official style as before, although my contract had still three years to run. All this happened five months after these same people had retained me by force in Albany, and had prevented me from going to Charleston.

My friends held a meeting the following evening, and resolved unanimously that they would not sanction these acts of violence. They determined to be guided by the law of the land. The case was referred to the Attorney-General, and he decided that I must appear in the synagogue at the hour of service in my official garb; that I must try to perform my official duties, and if any violence should be attempted, I could withdraw quickly, and either call on the police

for aid, or sue the congregation for the whole salary as called for by the contract. If, however, I did not appear at the time of service, the contract was abrogated.

At first I did not wish to put the matter to a test, but my friends insisted that the law must be satisfied. Consequently I went to the synagogue on New-Year's morning, appeared in my official garb, but found one of Spanier's creatures, who had been the cause of the altercation about the Sabbath, sitting in my chair. I took another seat. Excitement ruled the hour. Everything was quiet as the grave. Finally the choir sings Sulzer's great *En Komokho*. At the conclusion of the song I step before the ark in order to take out the scrolls of the law as usual, and to offer prayer. Spanier steps in my way, and, without saying a word, smites me with his fist so that my cap falls from my head. This was the terrible signal for an uproar the like of which I have never experienced. The people acted like furies. It was as though the synagogue had suddenly burst forth into a flaming conflagration. The Poles and Hungarians, who thought only of me, struck out like wild men. The young people jumped down from the choir-gallery to protect me, and had to fight their way through the surging crowd. Within two minutes the whole assembly was a struggling mass. The sheriff and his posse, who were summoned, were belabored and forced out until finally the whole assembly surged out of the house into Herkimer Street. "Louis Spanier," said I to him, "there is the law to which I can appeal." "I have a hundred thou-

sand dollars more than you. I do not fear the law. I will ruin you." I finally reached home, bowed with pain and inexpressible grief. The constable came and arrested me as the ringleader of a rebellious mob at a public service. Naturally, this had all been arranged beforehand; for this constable who arrested me was the gruffest and roughest in the city. He seized me by my coat, and thus led me to the police-station through the streets of Albany. Upon our arrival there, the whole rabble was present in order to feast their eyes on the sight of their rabbi appearing before court on New-Year's Day; but their hopes were disappointed, for the police judge went into an adjoining room and received me there. My friends had informed him of what had taken place, and he dismissed me on my word of honor. Three months later the constable died of a stroke of paralysis, one day after his discharge.

Who can describe that terrible day? Not I. It was agonizing, hellish torture. This victory of orthodoxy proved its grave wherein it was buried.

Nothing was done by our side on the holiday, although several of our friends were arrested and released on bail. We held New-Year's services at my house on the following day. The whole choir was present and was stationed in the front hall. The remainder of the congregation was in the two parlors. (The synagogue had been closed by the sheriff.) The two rooms were crowded. We had a number of members who were able to read the prayers. The service was conducted in an excellent manner. I preached comfort and consolation, and bade the wor-

shipers confide in the holy cause of Israel. There was not one dry eye. I alone did not weep, but controlled my feelings. No one could gaze into my heart. Had this occurred a year earlier, it would have cost my life; but I determined now that no man, no event, no turn of fate should ever again conquer me, and thus I was enabled to endure this blow. In the evening I had to enact the rôle of hero within my home circle, in order to quiet my wife, who wept constantly. It was only when I was at last alone that I began to feel the strain, and I lay all night on the sofa, burning with fever. But when the bright light of the morning dawned and seemed to send me greeting through the window, I felt well again. The battle had been fought, and I was prepared to enter upon a new path of life.

On the morning after our New-Year's day the children came to school so early that I had to go to the schoolhouse at eight o'clock. Upon my entrance, the children flocked about me in the large room. One boy addressed an improvised speech to me, and the children wept so bitterly that I was unable to soothe them for a long time. When I succeeded in this at last, I announced a vacation of two weeks, and kissed them all good-bye. I went hereupon to the library in order to take counsel with some friends. General Townsend met me on the way. Everybody in Albany knew this eccentric person. He was a stout man, always wore the same light-colored garments, always carried an umbrella under his arm, took a walk every day at the same hour through the same streets, never spoke a word

to any one on the street, and, after walking about two miles, always went to the post-office, where he asked for his letters and newspapers, and then proceeded homewards. I met this general on the street, and he addressed me: "Defeated, defeated, quite so—no gentlemen. Whither?" "I am going to the library." "No, no; you are going with me. About face, march!"

Since I knew the eccentric fellow very well, and his house stood diagonally opposite the library, I went with him. Without saying a word, he took me home, conducted me into his study, and began to tell me how he was constantly swindled by his agent who managed his considerable fortune, and then offered me the position at a not insignificant salary. He asked nothing more than that I should keep watch over his financial interests. I left him after promising to consider the matter; but I felt at once that I would not consent to be the servant of this man's money, although the offer had a beneficial effect upon me under the circumstances.

As I entered the State library, my friends pounced upon me, and told me some caustic truths. "This was necessary," said Chief-Justice Wood. "Ordinary insults could not bring you to reason." "I am perfectly reasonable. Common sense has been forced upon me. But what am I to do with it, now that I possess it?" "We will go at once to the court-house. You will announce your intention of taking the legal examination. To-morrow you will be examined; I will vouch for it; the day after to-morrow you will be admitted to the bar, and as soon as

I can find a suitable office, you shall be my partner. We will do a fine business. I am an old jurist, you are a splendid speaker; nothing further is necessary." With these words he took my arm, led me out of the room, followed by the whole literary clique of the library. Wood led me triumphantly to the courthouse, up the stairs into a side chamber, and there he left us. A few minutes later, Judges Harris and Parker came into the room, greeted me in the most cordial manner, and shook me by the hand so heartily that I felt cheerful and happy indeed. Parker declared openly: "Your examination will be only *pro forma*. It makes little difference what you have read or what you have not read. My colleagues and I know that you are a man of learning. More is unnecessary. You are well able to read what you require." Harris wished to conduct the examination that very evening. Wood declined this because he wished to invite Amos Dean, who was out of the city. A host of lawyers surrounded me within a few minutes, and greeted me heartily as a colleague. It will be understood, as a matter of course, that we all had to go to the French restaurant after these exertions to take lunch and drain the contents of a number of glasses. We were about twenty. Everything passed off well, and I went home in cheerful mood.

My wife, who was still sad and tearful (it is a well-known fact that when women once begin to weep, it is some time before they cease) was amazed to see me joke, laugh, kiss the children, and hum a tune quite as usual. "Has the prophet Elijah met

you anywhere?" she asked, somewhat testily. "Such messengers are not needed in a free country," said I. "Freedom is Elijah and the Messiah." I told her what I had done that forenoon. She seemed to agree perfectly with me, and was so pleased with my energetic proceeding that she likewise became cheerful and happy. She made love to me, and I listened. She said that she had never doubted my energy, and had felt sure yesterday that I would not succumb. I was flattered. Her concluding words were that she had ever trusted in God, and I felt uplifted.

All went well until I found myself alone in my study in the afternoon. There stood the books, the silent witnesses of my plans, that seemed to look at me warningly. They had a magic effect upon my inflammable fantasy, and I felt wondrously moved. The cold, calculating intellect receded ever further into the dark background, and the imagination exerted its power. It was as though the books spoke to me: "Hold, faithless one! Thou art lured into by-paths. Hast thou not suffered, hungered, waked, struggled with all untoward circumstances in order to serve the faith of thy fathers? Where are thy resolutions, thy holy vows that God alone heard? Where is thy zeal, thy enthusiasm, thy love for the heritage of Israel? Was all that merely stage-play? Wilt thou leave thy post and betray the holy cause to its blinded enemies?" Thus the voices sounded within me until fantasy had me in its power completely. I jumped up from my chair and cried aloud: "No, no! I shall not prove false to my holy mission!

They shall not be put to shame through me who hope for Thee; they shall not blush on my account who seek Thee, O God of Israel!"

I spoke so loud that my wife, affrighted, rushed into the room. "For God's sake, what ails you?" "Nothing, nothing at all. I have dreamed foolish things." "You look so pale; you are concealing your spiritual struggles;" and her tears began to flow. I summoned all my eloquence and persuasiveness to my aid to convince her that I had fallen asleep, had had a horrible dream, and had awakened with a loud cry. The dear child believed me, and wanted to know what the dream was. "Dreams come from the belly," said I, in order to change her mood by means of a rather profane forcible expression; "I dreamed foolish nonsense. You know that dreams never disturb me." In short, I succeeded in calming her, and in an hour I was alone again. Reason again had the upper hand, and I said to myself: "You are the father of a family. It is your duty to provide for those dependent on you. You have no prospects in Judaism; for you are standing all alone on the platform of the future. The orthodox hate you, and the reformers have no love for you. In the law, on the other hand, a lucrative field lies stretched before you, to say nothing of a great political career. Wherefore shall I waste the talents that God has given me on blind, ungrateful people, when I can devote them to the weal of my family and my country." I doubted and hesitated, without being able to come to any conclusion, and night had fallen when my wife came to call me to supper. She

appeared perfectly satisfied and cheerful, and I was glad of it. I chatted about Heine's poems, which we had just begun to read, took my little daughter on my lap, played, joked, laughed, as though nothing unusual had taken place. But the eventful day was not to close in this way. Between eight and nine o'clock a friend appeared, and asked me to accompany him to the meeting, where a number of my friends were gathered in consultation. I did so. We reached the place of meeting after a short walk. I found the most prominent members of the congregation, together with a large number of young men, assembled. The vice-president, Joseph Sporberg, was in the chair. An air of earnestness prevailed, and a pause of intense quiet ensued upon my entrance. The presiding officer informed me that those present could no longer remain members of the Bethel congregation; that the meeting had resolved unanimously to organize a new reform congregation that I was to name (I called it *Anshe Emeth*), on the condition that I promised my co-operation; that the congregation wished to take steps at once to furnish a temporary synagogue, buy ground for a cemetery, and build a new temple, or else buy a church and remodel it for this purpose; that twenty-six members of the congregation would undertake the task of organizing the new congregation and reaching some understanding with the Bethel congregation; that my position in the new congregation should be according to my own wishes, and that all litigation was to be avoided, with the exception of bringing Louis Spanier to trial; for he would have

to be punished for his actions. Here, then, I stood suddenly and unexpectedly at the parting of the ways. Moved though I was by the devotion and fealty of my friends, filled with admiration at the quick and energetic action, the purposeful procedure, and the conciliatory spirit, I yet hesitated and vacillated. I did not reply at once. Thereupon a member present arose (I believe it was Dr. Joseph Lewi) and addressed me: "We all recognize that this is a critical moment for American Judaism, which must be either thoroughly reformed or die. We recognize no less clearly that you are the bearer of the new idea, which will conquer or fall with you. We are ready to stand by you to the end, and to sacrifice everything in our power. If we endure, the orthodox party will soon perceive that it gave itself the death-blow last *Rosh Hashanah*. If we fail, Judaism will fall with us. As for Louis Spanier, we can not do otherwise than we have resolved; he must suffer the legal penalty; for a shameful thing has been done in Israel."

All my doubts dissolved like soap-bubbles. Although I took much that was said with a grain of salt, yet I could not do otherwise than express my thanks to my enthusiastic friends for their faithful adherence, and gave them the assurance that I would work for the new congregation with all the enthusiasm of my soul. The *Anshe Emeth* congregation was incorporated the next day, and I was fettered anew to Judaism. My non-Jewish friends, to whom I recounted the whole occurrence, were of different opinions. Some considered it weakness on my part, and others said it was a matter of conscience, and

that being the case, little was to be said. Chief-Justice Wood said to me: "In your blind enthusiasm you are cutting off a brilliant future among us. You will regret it later, perhaps too late." It was too late. I refused to listen to my Mephistopheles.

A third-story room was procured. Benches without backs were nailed together, chairs were secured, two scrolls of the law were obtained, and on the following *Yom Kippur* services were held in the improvised place. The whole choir was present, and Sulzer's compositions were successfully rendered. The congregation was assembled in this uninviting place. They sat on rough benches, and yet all were present—women and girls, men and boys—not one was missing. A spirit of devotion and exaltation such as is rarely met with pervaded the assembly. That day was one of the most touching of my whole life. The room was crowded all day long. A new spirit seemed to possess all. A band of courageous and spirited champions of progressive Judaism, possessed of an inexpressible enthusiasm, had arisen out of the defeat which we had suffered. On that *Yom Kippur* day I saw American Judaism arise out of the grave, to go forth to ever new triumphs; and it has not deceived me in my expectations.*

*The following very interesting communication from the pen of Mr. Isidor Lewi, of New York, may be properly inserted here as a commentary on the exciting incidents which led to the formation of the *Anshe Emeth* congregation:

"In connection with the story of Dr. Wise's life at Albany, the following may be of interest.

"When it became evident that the anti-Wise party would continue its opposition, and that the reform measures would not be accepted by them, the Doctor's friends determined to form a new congregation, and a meeting was held for that purpose in the house

"TEMPLE ISRAEL"

occupied jointly by Dr. Wise and Dr. Lewi. A vacant loft in the business district was rented, and there the first religious service under the new régime was conducted. A few chairs and benches constituted the furniture, and as a reading-desk a little toilet table was used. This was donated for the purpose by the wife of one of Dr. Wise's stanchest friends, and was the chief ornament at the first service in the 'Razor-strop Schul,' the name applied to the place by the opposition because the loft had been used shortly before as a razor-strop factory.

"When Dr. Wise went to New York about fifteen years later to dedicate the Temple Emanuel, he stopped on the way at Albany, and in his room at Dr. Lewi's house he recognized the old table, and was pleased that it had been preserved. In 1884 he was in Albany again and asked if the table still existed, and when assured that it was still in as good condition as when he saw it last, he said: 'Some day the part that it played will be forgotten—it should be marked.'

"On his return to Cincinnati he wrote the following memorandum, and sent it with the request that it be kept with the table:

"*My Dear Friend Isidor:* This table was used as a reading-desk and pulpit in my home in Albany, N. Y., on Westerlo Street, for the first reform service held by the then forming congregation *Anshe Emeth*, the first reform congregation in Albany, and the fourth in the United States. It was donated for the purpose by Mrs. Coleman, and was given on my departure from Albany to your dear mother as a memento of the days of trial which we had seen together under circumstances that shaped events which became of great moment in directing the course of American Judaism.

"'Yours very truly, ISAAC M. WISE.'

"Of the men who gathered at that service and helped to hold up the hands of the young rabbi, none remain. The last to pass away was Dr. Lewi, whose friendship for Dr. Wise began in the little town in Bohemia, where Dr. Wise first officiated, and where his oldest child—Mrs. Benjamin May, of Cincinnati—was the young physician's first patient."

Another of Dr. Wise's Albany pupils, Mr. Simon M. Simpson, writes as follows in reference to the above communication:

"Your correspondent is in error, as *all* of the former adherents of Dr. Wise have not yet passed away.

"Mr. Joseph Beckel, still actively engaged in business in New York City, was one of the founders of the Literary Society, and a member of the choir so often spoken of in the 'Reminiscences.' Of women, there are still a number who were firm and devoted friends of Dr. Wise in those days of long ago, and these still regale their grand and great grandchildren with stories of Dr. Wise's memorable career in Albany."

IX

MY intimate friends feared lest these recent events might endanger my health again. It was therefore resolved to grant me a month's vacation, which was to be devoted to travel. It being known that I never undertook a journey without some definite object, I received the commission to collect funds for the new reform congregation. I was left entirely free as to whither I should go and how I should spend my time. Shortly after the fall holidays I bade good-bye to my dear ones, and went to New York. I met Horace Greeley on the steamer, who had me tell him the whole story, which he published in the *Tribune* the next day. "But why do you not answer all the accusations of your opponents which they make publicly?" "Because I have no organ," answered I. "That need not embarrass you," he rejoined. "Write whatever you wish to have the public know, and I will provide for its publication." I accepted the cordial offer, and said that I would get to work as soon as I reached home.

I knew very well that it is a mistake to defer explaining one's course until after the opponents have prepossessed the public mind; but I was waiting to see whether there was not one man in America who would write a word in my behalf and for the cause of reform. I was, however, again to experience the

bitter truth that I stood alone, completely alone. Not one of those who were able to write had the courage to espouse the cause of reform publicly.

I was received coldly everywhere in New York, except at Lilienthal's house. No one remembered ever to have seen me; no one wished to have anything to do with me. I was denounced as a mischievous disturber of the peace. Merzbacher was sick, and I did not wish to worry him. After spending one day in New York, I understood perfectly well that I was discredited. In the evening I met Moritz Lehmayer, who had been a dear friend of mine for years. I informed him how I was misjudged in New York. "What difference can it make to you? You do not wish to buy anything on credit, do you?" Lehmayer asked. "No; I wish no credit, but I require money for the new reform congregation in Albany in order that the good people there may be encouraged." "In that case, I bid you come to me to-morrow; I will collect money," said Lehmayer, and he kept his promise. I called on him the next day at his place of business, and found him ready to go to work. After heading the subscription list with the name of his firm, Lehmayer Bros., he went with me for two days to all his friends and acquaintances, and they had to sign. Even August Belmont had to contribute ten dollars, a fact which angers him possibly to this day. We collected a handsome sum. I do not recall how much it was, but it was enough to encourage my friends at home and myself. Since no one else in New York would take any notice of me, I went to Philadelphia. I had a

number of friends and countrymen there, to whom I introduced myself, since I did not want to go to Isaac Leeser. One of them told Mr. Adler, the *parnass* of the *Rodef Shalom* Congregation, that I was in the city, at Hotel N. Mr. Adler came to visit me a few hours thereafter. We were strangers to one another; yet Adler asked me to preach in the *Rodef Shalom* synagogue on Saturday.

"For whom?" I asked him. "Our congregation is large," said Adler, "the largest in Philadelphia." "But who will listen to me, the most discredited of men?" "There are many who wish to hear you," Adler rejoined; "those who do not, need not come." A notice appeared in all the papers the following morning to the effect that Rabbi Wise, of Albany, would preach in the *Rodef Shalom* synagogue on Saturday. The most holy orthodox party threatened to devour Adler (so he informed me later), but he would not be diverted from his course.

I repaired to the synagogue on Saturday at the appointed time. It was large, but turned the wrong way. The entrance was from the east, on both sides of the ark, where the pulpit was; and the people were forced to turn around after reaching their seats. There was a good *chazan*, Mr. Frankel, who still officiates in that congregation. The service was orthodox, but decorous and reverent. The house gradually filled until there was not an empty seat, and even the broad aisles were crowded. The women's gallery was packed, and Mr. Adler looked at me triumphantly. Isaac Leeser and most of the Portuguese who understood German were among

the auditors. I was surprised at the multitude, but I did not trust them. "What if these people have come to raise a disturbance? What if only a hundred have come with such a purpose? What is bitter fanaticism not capable of?" A feeling of horror took possession of me. I grew frightened until finally my good genius, which never leaves me in the lurch—viz., the proud feeling, "I am master, and you are sitting at Gamaliel's feet"—came to my rescue. "So be it!" thought I. "I will be moderate and calm; but I shall suppress nothing." Nor did I. Basing on the life of Abraham, I preached on the religion of humanity. I clothed my thoughts in the most poetical language at my command, so that the good people had no time to grow angry, because they were too busily occupied with flowers and blossoms. They listened attentively a full hour, and at the close of the service it seemed as though the handshaking would never come to an end. Isaac Leeser also shook hands with me, and the hoary heads followed his example. Adler's victory was complete. Taking my arm, he led me triumphantly to his house to introduce me to his wife and daughters, who overwhelmed me with attentions. "I am happy that I was not mistaken in my man," said Adler. He now mentioned the names of those in the congregation who advocated reform; viz., the Brothers Springer, Kaufman, Klopfer, Goldmann, Stern, and others, who organized the reform society several years later, from which the temple congregation sprang. After dinner I informed Mr. Adler of my desire to collect money for my congregation in Albany, and we re-

solved that I should deliver a lecture in the synagogue two weeks later. He volunteered to have the tickets printed on the morrow, and to have his friends dispose of them. This was the first step in Philadelphia towards the formation of a reform congregation. This was accomplished five years later. I interested myself in the matter, remained in Philadelphia several days longer, sought the acquaintanceship of the advocates of the reform movement, and bade them be of good cheer. They were few in number, but they were men of character, who were moved by new thoughts.

There was at that time not one Jewish preacher in Philadelphia. Leeser had lost his position. A *chazan* officiated in the Polish congregation, who expressed his surprise at Frankel's conducting the service if the *m'shummad* from Albany was to preach. He called on me two weeks later to ask for a ticket to my lecture, although his *parnass* was my friend and countryman, Abeles. The *Rodef Shalom* congregation had some time before elected a tramp by the name of Kohn as their preacher. He fell in love with a handsome Christian maiden, eloped with her, and had himself baptized in order to marry her. This aroused a bitter feeling of disgust at rabbis and preachers. New-fashioned orthodoxy was the order of the day; no one dared even whisper the word "reform." Yet the spark lay glimmering beneath the ashes. All that was necessary was a leader, an advocate. The people learned now all at once that reform had a spokesman, and they

were on the alert. Therefore my appearance in Philadelphia was of some significance.

I went to Baltimore on Wednesday. I was received most cordially by the rabbis stationed there. One of them was my friend and countryman, Dr. Guenzberg, of blessed memory. The second was the amiable Dr. Hochheimer, who was favorable to reform; and the third, Dr. Braun, was the rabbi of the *Har Sinai* congregation, and was naturally well acquainted and in sympathy with my aims and strivings. The members of the *Har Sinai* congregation—Lauer, Putzel, Nachman, Hecht, and others—treated me most cordially, so that I soon felt at home, especially as Mrs. Schloss and her daughter treated me like a rich and childless uncle, from whom a great legacy is expected. In the evening the rabbis and the officers of the congregations called on me, and we resolved that I should preach Saturday morning in the Lloyd Street Synagogue, in the afternoon in the Fell's Point Synagogue, Sunday in the *Har Sinai* Temple, and deliver a lecture Tuesday for the benefit of the Albany Congregation. Steps toward carrying out these arrangements were to be taken the next morning. After the gentlemen had left me, I received a telegram from Philadelphia from Adler, who bade me return to Philadelphia immediately, since the people insisted on hearing me again. I answered that I had entered upon engagements that I had to fulfill, but that I would be in Philadelphia the following Sabbath. I went sightseeing in Baltimore the following day. The city

and the people pleased me. There seemed to be many Jews there, although everything was very primitive. Women stood in front of the small shops carrying children in their arms, or else knitting busily. Young men invited passers-by to enter this or that store to buy. *M'zuzoth*, *Tzitzith*, *Talethim*, *Kosher cheese*, and *Eretz Yisrael* earth were on sale. On the other hand, there were many prominent Jewish wholesale houses on Baltimore Street, where everything was conducted in an orderly and business-like manner. The congregations had three handsome synagogues and two schools, which were conducted quite well; but the children sat with covered heads. In short, everything appeared to be orthodox and primitive, except in the *Har Sinai* congregation. This was a radical reform congregation. It was small and hated, but firm and persevering. Its members were intelligent people.

I fulfilled my engagements on Saturday and Sunday, and the people did not fail to put in an appearance in large numbers. I set forth the principles of the reform movement quite clearly in three addresses, just as I had done in Philadelphia. I embellished my thoughts with flowery expressions, threw bombshells into the camp of orthodoxy, and held aloft the standard of constructive reform. Everybody seemed to be satisfied (for there was something for everybody), except Rabbi Abraham Reiss, of blessed memory, secretary of the Lloyd Street Synagogue, who could not digest the new themes. After I had left Baltimore, he requested the permission to preach on the following Saturday,

and said he wished to make *Weiss* black. Hochheimer, however, refused to grant him the privilege, and Wise remained white. There was a large number of young people in Baltimore at that time, and it was upon them that the three addresses left the deepest impression. Shortly thereafter they organized the reform congregation, at present the largest in Baltimore, with its fine temple on Hanover Street. All the Jewish young people of Baltimore attended my lecture on Tuesday evening. A close and friendly relationship has existed between young Baltimore Jewry and myself since that time. I have often come into contact with them, and am very fond of them to this day.

After finishing my work in Baltimore, I made a short detour to Washington. Many changes had taken place since my last visit. President Taylor had died in the meantime, and Millard Fillmore was President, and Daniel Webster Secretary of State. I wished only to pay my respects to these two distinguished dignitaries, since Congress was not in session. Therefore, immediately upon my arrival, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, I went to the Treasury Building, in the east wing of which the rooms of the Foreign Office were situated, and there I found Daniel Webster. I had the idea that a great deal of formality was necessary in seeking the presence of the prime minister. Hence I took a card from the table in the vestibule, and wrote, "The undersigned begs for the favor of a brief audience," and signed my name. The doorkeeper took my card, and before I would have thought it pos-

sible, Webster stood in front of me in the vestibule, extended his hand, and asked: "My friend, wherefore this formality? Step in. I am happy to see you." We entered his private office, at that time the southeast corner of the building, the same room which Seward later used for the same purpose. Two strangers were there, to whom Webster introduced me as his excellent friend. One of them was Senator Benjamin, the other Lieutenant Maury, the famous scholar, whose book on the trade-winds aroused so much attention. "Mr. Senator," said Webster to Benjamin, "my friend is of your race. I would have said your co-religionist, but I do not know how much or how little you believe; and in truth we four are all co-religionists, since we are all Unitarians." Maury objected to this, since he had never belonged to any Church organization, and had never made any public confession of faith; and Benjamin protested likewise, since in his opinion Judaism and Unitarianism were entirely different. An interesting discussion arose, and Benjamin proposed that we three should dine with him in the evening and debate the subject. "Aha!" mused I, "so the gentlemen speak also of religion over their champagne and cigars." The invitation was accepted, and both gentlemen arose to take their departure. I thought that I ought to follow their example, but Webster remarked: "You came after these gentlemen. I have still twenty minutes to spare." I therefore remained; the others departed. "I have time to listen, if you have anything to say to me," said Webster, sitting down next to me on the sofa. "I am much obliged

to you, Your Excellency," I answered, somewhat embarrassed. "I came here to congratulate you and the President on the high office in which Providence has placed you. I wish you God's choicest blessing for the weal of the fatherland and humanity." I was surprised when this man of gigantic intellect, visibly touched, extended to me his hand in sign of thanks. "You really wish for nothing?" said he, after a pause. "Well, you can be easily accommodated. I have heard from Amos Dean, of Albany, how you were treated there, and how, in spite thereof, you have still remained true to your calling. Is that really true?" Upon my affirming this, he continued: "You seem to have more enthusiasm for Judaism than our ministers have for the Church. This is worthy of all praise, although it seems to lie in the Jewish blood, as appears clearly from the prophets of the Old Testament and the Jewish martyrs of all ages. I am able to offer you a number of positions here, but refrain from doing so. Your decision appears to me sublime."

Now it was my turn to be moved and to thank him; in truth, tears started to my eyes. The same words spoken by any one else would have, in all likelihood, produced but little effect on me; but, coming from Webster, they seemed the judgment of the loftiest intelligence. A brief conversation followed, when the Russian ambassador was announced. As I was leaving, Webster said to me, "One spark of enthusiasm is worth more than a whole conflagration of reason." I went to the hotel to write down every word carefully. I believe I succeeded. I

looked upon Webster's words in the light of a Solomonic decision, because I considered him the greatest intellect of whom America could boast at this time.

At two o'clock I called upon the President. Millard Fillmore was a good man and a skillful politician, but he had not a great mind. His culture was superficial and insignificant and his reasoning powers circumscribed. He possessed, however, keen intuition, a pleasing exterior, and engaging manners. Amiable by nature, he seemed to be always smiling, and understood the art of attaching every one to himself. I was introduced without further ceremony and cordially received. Fillmore inquired for his friends and acquaintances in Albany, where he had lived shortly before for several years as State Comptroller. I gave him the desired information, and congratulated him on his unexpected rise to the Presidency. I asked him further if I could attend to anything for him in Albany, and was on the point of leaving. This seemed to puzzle him, and he said to me: "Washington is a costly place to linger in. If you desire anything from me, out with it at once." When I assured him that I had come for the sole purpose of congratulating him, he seemed astounded and asked me, "Do you know nothing of the petition?" "Your Excellency, I know of no petition."

He now informed me that he had received a petition from Albany, signed by Dr. Beck and others, in which he was requested to appoint me to a position in the library of Congress, and that he had

provided for my entering upon the position the following New-Year's Day.

Had I gone first to Fillmore and then to Webster, I would in all likelihood have wavered in my plans upon receiving this offer; for the position was one that appealed to me. However, when I recalled Webster's words, I did not hesitate one moment. I refused the position with thanks, and explained to the President my obligations. As I left, he said to me again that if I should ever be in an embarrassing situation, I should apply to him at once.

I now desired to spend a few hours in the Patent Office, and went there. The Patent Office is of great importance for the furtherance of learning, because all the models and all the descriptions of all the inventions made in America are open for inspection. Here one aspect of freedom clearly appears; namely, the flourishing of the inventive genius in the atmosphere of freedom. I met Lieutenant Maury in the vestibule, and he took me to his office. Here I saw the journals wherein were contained the reports on winds made by all American navigators in the course of thirty-five years. This formed the material for Maury's book. I had no opportunity to look at the models because I had to be back at the hotel at five in order to reach Benjamin's in time.

In the evening the four gentlemen spoken of above assembled for dinner in a private apartment at Willard's Hotel. Webster began the interrupted conversation at once, and wanted to know my opinions. I referred to Theodore Parker's conception

of Unitarianism, and set over against this my conception of Judaism. This forced me to the conclusion that there was no essential difference in the matter of doctrine, but in historical development, which, however, did not enter into the question of doctrine. "It is well," said Webster, extending his hand to me; "you are indeed my co-religionist." Maury made the droll confession that he believed something of the same kind, but he had never had time to give it a definite form. Benjamin alone was not satisfied. He had a confused notion of orthodox Portuguese Judaism; and although he rarely heard anything about it, and was never guided by it, he yet insisted that he had no co-religionists beside the Jews. The conversation was most interesting to me; only I felt very sorry that Benjamin could not cite one Jewish source, while Webster was thoroughly versed in the Bible, and had a full knowledge of history.

Our conversation lasted till about ten o'clock. Then Maury took us to the observatory, and gave us a free lecture on astronomy till near midnight. Maury left with Webster, while I went with Benjamin to the hotel. The following morning I left for Philadelphia. I must supplement here that there was a fifth person in our circle—*i. e.*, Mrs. F. I am not at liberty to give her name. Upon my return to the hotel in the afternoon, the clerk told me that a lady had been waiting for me for several hours. I went with him to the parlor. He showed me a heavily-veiled lady who accosted me at once (without giving her name) with the question, "Will you

speak here?" "No, I leave to-morrow morning." "Where do you go from here?" she asked me, in real American fashion. "To Philadelphia," I answered. I was about to excuse myself when Benjamin stepped into the parlor and approached us. "If I am not mistaken, you are Mrs. F.," he said to the veiled lady. She extended her hand, and he seemed happy to meet her. "I will not interrupt," said I, and wished to leave. "No, no; I did not come to see Mr. Benjamin, although I am very glad to meet him," said the lady. "I am a very respectable woman; but yet I have followed you from Philadelphia to Baltimore to hear you speak, and I came here with the same purpose, and now I am going back to Philadelphia."

This whimsical woman spent the evening in the above-mentioned circle at the urgent request of Benjamin, and the following morning she traveled with me to Philadelphia. Benjamin had informed me that Mrs. F. was a highly respectable woman, a happy wife and mother, and very well-to-do; that she had lived several years in Europe, particularly in Germany, at first with her mother, then with her husband; that she had studied painting, and although she had relinquished all thought of following an artistic career at the wish of her husband, her home was a veritable temple of the arts and the meeting-place of gifted people. Although she spoke little during the evening, what she said proved her to be possessed of exquisite tact, cultured speech, and noble sentiments.

Upon my arrival at the station in the morning, Mrs. F. was already in the ladies' waiting-room, ac-

companied by a negress and a fifteen-year-old boy. She was just as heavily veiled as she had been the day before at the hotel; but I recognized her at once nevertheless. Politeness demanded that I devote myself to her, although I would rather have had the day to myself, since I had gathered much food for thought in Washington.

"As you see," said she, "I have plenty of servants. I only want your company." Since, in addition to all else, she also addressed me in German, I was completely conquered. I accompanied her to the car, selected a seat for her, and traveled in her company. Mrs. F., who will certainly read these lines, will forgive me for thinking at that time that I must put a good face on the matter. The woman was so superior to me in tact and diplomacy that I was like a schoolboy in her hands, and permitted myself to be thoroughly catechised by her. In an hour she knew more about me than I had intended to tell in a year. "Women are poor narrators," a highly cultured friend said to me recently; "but they can catechise sharply, penetrate into the innermost chambers of the soul, and discover the greatest secrets." All this Mrs. F. proved conclusively during that trip from Washington to Philadelphia. I was ashamed of my weakness. Here I sat opposite a woman who, in age, was, at most, ten years older than I; but yet, in her knowledge of human nature and her cleverness she was fifty years my senior, and she had studied neither theology nor philosophy, she had read neither the Talmud nor the Vedas.

While we were crossing the Susquehanna from

Havre de Grace by steamer, which trip took some time, she said that after I had spoken in Baltimore on the preceding Tuesday, she had written a poem, which she wanted to read to me. "I did not know that you are a poetess also." "I am not; but at times I write my thoughts in rhyme. It occurred to me to write something about you. You are no Macbeth, and I am no witch; neither am I a gypsy nor a fortune-teller; but after I heard you speak a few times, and had examined you closely and carefully, I drew the following picture of you from your words, glances, and gestures." She read me a poem, written in good hexameters in English. The contents were somewhat as follows: This young orator is the morning star of American Judaism; he announces the break of day with irrestistible power; he will spread salvation and light, but he himself can never be happy, for three demoniacal furies struggle within him: viz., reason, which wishes to find the final cause and can not; intelligence, which wishes to harmonize all differences and can not; and the sympathetic nature, which feels all sorrows and pleasures, love and hatred, joy and misery, the more deeply the oftener it is disappointed. He will have to strive, think, and live in solitude, because there will be none who can do things as he does, or who will be able to satisfy him. He will remain ever young; but also ever unhappy. These three irreconcilable demons will grow and ever grow, will contend with one another, and rend the heart. Pity, a thousand pities, that Providence does not apportion its gifts more harmoniously. I shuddered as I listened to the poem, and as I read

it myself afterwards. "You are mistaken, Mrs. F.," said I. "I am a careless chap who takes nothing seriously. I am an incorrigibile optimist, to whom everything appears in roseate hues."

"But not you yourself; is it not so? And that is exactly what I say," she answered, significantly. "Let us talk about something else."

"Give me the poem as a souvenir, Madame!"

"If you wish it, with pleasure. I have a copy of it."

She gave me the poem, and I have preserved it as a sacred relic. Upon our arrival in Philadelphia, a carriage met her. Without a word of invitation or farewell she took her seat in the carriage, and it rolled away. Later I learned the reason of this peculiar behavior; but at that time it annoyed me (may Mrs. F. forgive me), for the oracular poem had filled me with dismay. "What does the woman want?" I asked myself; but could find no satisfactory answer. I was quite aware of the fact that noble women often joined in the chase, not for the sake of the booty, but only in order to see the animal shot, bleed, and quiver. But this thought is something quite incomprehensible to me. Happily my carriage had arrived at the hotel. I had to step out and think of other things.

I found a number of visiting cards at the hotel. Among them was that of the *parnass* Adler with a note, requesting me to call upon him as soon as I arrived. I did so.

Mr. Adler told me that even a larger assemblage than the first time, if that were possible, would gather

on the following Sabbath to hear me, and that all the tickets for the lecture would in all likelihood be sold. He informed me that a number of men were taking steps to have me elected rabbi of the *Rodef Shalom* congregation, and that he felt convinced that the election would be well-nigh unanimous. Since he did not put a direct question to me, I did not feel called upon to give an answer. I therefore said nothing.

Adler had prophesied correctly. The house was crowded, both at the service on Saturday and the lecture on Sunday, and diagonally opposite the pulpit sat Mrs. F., who did not remove her eye from me even for a moment. Several gentlemen, among whom was Mr. Pomeisel, of blessed memory, visited me on Sunday evening, and informed me that they wished to propose me as rabbi of the *Rodef Shalom* congregation, and that my election would encounter but little opposition, which would be very weak at that. I was now compelled to explain my relations to the newly-formed congregation of Albany, and the consequent impossibility of my entering into any negotiations with them.

My lecture on Sunday evening was on "The Origin of Reform," an historical sketch from Saadia to the year 1850, in which I proved that war had been declared on the authority of the Talmud, with the beginning of philosophical and exegetical studies, and that the decline of casuistical Judaism stands in the relation of cause and effect to the growth of free thought. I aimed to give reform an historical foundation. In the next number of the *Occident*, Isaac

Leeser, to my great surprise, spoke of the lecture in terms of praise, and stated that reform, basing on the Gaon Saadia, Bachya, Maimonides, and Abarbanel, must certainly be acceptable to every one. But that was not all. He told his readers also that I had adduced such beautiful statements concerning Baruch Spinoza, and he (Leeser) had never heard that Spinoza had exerted such an influence on the intellectual development of mankind or on Jewish history. In fact, I said nothing about Spinoza that Mendelssohn had not already said. I now saw clearly that Leeser did not know the meaning of the reform movement, and that he had never read Spinoza nor Mendelssohn, Jost nor universal history.

On Sunday evening a letter containing a costly ring was brought me from Mrs. F. She wrote me that she could not invite me to her house, because she was to leave that evening with her husband for New Orleans, to escape the rigor of the winter season there and in Cuba. She overwhelmed me with compliments, and begged me to count her among my warmest friends. I returned the ring because I have never worn ornaments, and wrote a suitable answer to her letter.

Late in the evening the captain of a steamer plying between Philadelphia and New York called on me. His family lived in Albany, and was on friendly terms with me. He invited me to travel with him to New York, since a short sea voyage was most delightful in the glorious autumn weather. I accepted the invitation, and left Philadelphia Monday morning.

If my brief sojourn in Washington had pleased and encouraged me beyond expression, the results achieved in Baltimore and Philadelphia were of much greater importance for me. I recognized that the Jewish masses were susceptible to reform if this were explained to them clearly and eloquently. Hence Albanian orthodoxy had defeated neither the reform movement nor myself. This conviction, gained from the facts in the case, was the real treasure that I had gathered in a very short space of time. The enthusiasm of Mrs. F. afforded striking proof of the opinions that were prevalent in cultured circles, although Senator Benjamin, who took no interest in Judaism, was still laboring beneath the weight of mediævalism. I felt refreshed and encouraged. My resolution and determination to work for light and progress received a fresh impetus. I was again the optimist, the world-improver, the enthusiast.

The trip down the Delaware to Cape May, then along the Jersey coast to the narrow channel that connects the ocean and New York Bay, on a calm moonlit night on board a swiftly-flying steamer is fairy-like and charming. The silver-enveloped boat glides softly and almost inaudibly upon the surface of the deep. On either bank of the Delaware, and then on the shore of the sea, everything seems transformed, and the stars in the firmament, the sacred scripture of all times and places, become the love-letters of God to mankind. Every feeling in one's breast is attuned to the praise of the eternal love. I was in my element. I could think, love, and wor-

ship in songs without words. The captain and the small company were very entertaining. There were songs, anecdotes, and declamations. I was compelled to participate. This I did mechanically, for my spirit was away, immersed in the beauty of the scenery and the lovely night. The company finally dispersed, and I was at liberty to dream and build air-castles the whole night long. Mrs. F.'s poem appeared tantalizingly among the beautiful pictures. I laughed at it, and considered the woman to be a visionary. I recognized at once that she was far superior to me in cleverness and knowledge of human nature; but I recognized further that I was but an artless child, and that it did not take much to be superior to me in these things. I called myself a credulous boy, a fantastic fool; but I could not exercise the mocking spirit. The gray of the morning dawn found me still walking dreamily on the deck of the ship. I dropped into an arm-chair, and fell asleep. When I awoke the sun was high in the heavens, and I saw, to my amazement, that we were in the vicinity of those rocky shores where I had stood four years previously on my arrival from Europe, and had had that terrible dream which I have told at the beginning of these reminiscences. The events of the past, with all its struggles and sufferings, now passed in review before me. The dream, thought I, has been partly fulfilled; yes, Mrs. F. is all right; I shall never be happy. A terrible fate has condemned me to be the scapegoat of an era in contradiction with itself. I grew terrified. The future looked blank. "It is

enough, O Lord!" I cried out; but it was not enough. The worst was still to come. Happy was I that I knew it not at the time. The captain brought my melancholy meditations to a sudden end. He invited me to breakfast. It was some time before he succeeded in enlivening me; but we ate, drank, smoked, and chatted while the boat steamed up the bay, and we arrived at New York in cheerful spirits.

X

AT that time one could leave New York for Albany only in the morning or at night; therefore I had to remain over till evening, and as usual I went to Dr. Lilienthal's. Here I was taken in hand by Dr. Moritz Mayer, a teacher in Lilienthal's school. He expatiated on the merits of the *B'ne Brith* order, and persuaded me to join it. That very evening my name was proposed for membership in Lodge No. 2. I was accepted and initiated. The ritual seemed to me colorless, the people commonplace, and the proceedings unbearably wearisome and trivial. The whole thing seemed to me childish tomfoolery, and made so disagreeable an impression on me that I thought immediately of plans of improvement, which, however, did not materialize till twelve years later.

I hurried home the next evening to my dear ones, whom I found well and hearty. I had brought back some money for the new congregation and much encouragement. My school had been opened by the teachers at the appointed time; hence I was enabled to go to work at once. My friends were full of confidence. The leaders of the young *Anshe Emeth* congregation had done splendid work in the meantime. They had rented quarters in the second story of a suitable building, although the Universalists had offered us their church, an offer which we could not

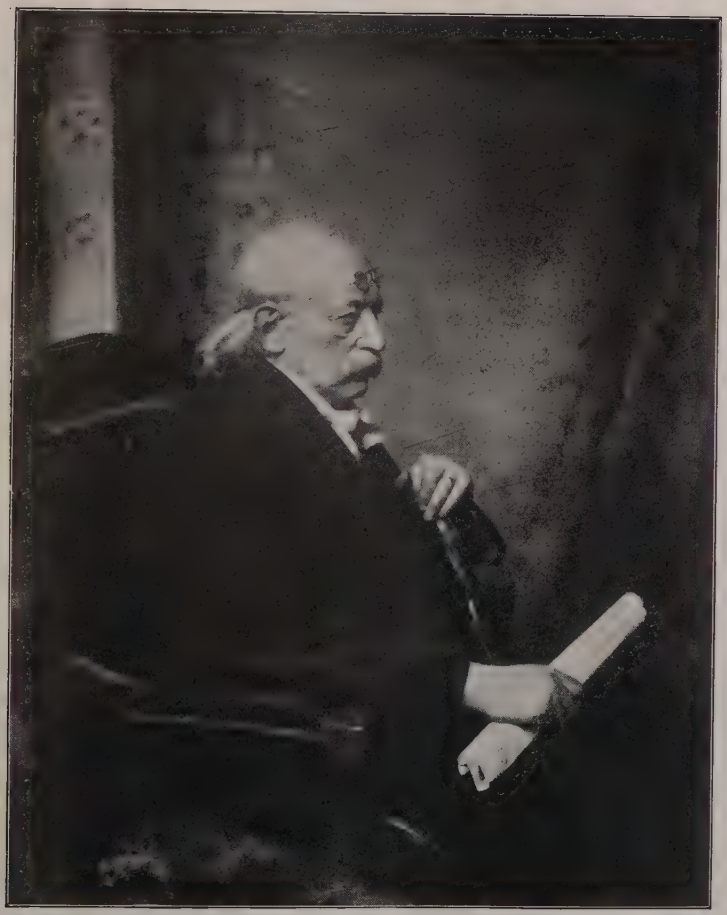
accept at the time. All the suits but two had been settled, and these were of a personal nature. The retiring members received from the *Bethel* congregation an inconsiderable amount of money, which was devoted at once to the purchase of a piece of land to be used as a cemetery. Upon my return I found the congregation completely organized and in full swing. Nothing was lacking except a temple, and that, too, came in good time.

All reforms were abrogated in the *Bethel* synagogue, and the orthodox party held high carnival as in the old Ghetto days. This did not provoke me so much as did the abrogation of the fund for the support of widows and orphans, which had existed in conjunction with the Mt. Carmel Lodge. My opponents had taken advantage of my absence, and had divided the money among the members. They had robbed the widows and orphans, in order to anger me. Nothing was left for me but to resign from the lodge. Thereupon we organized the sewing society, with Mrs. Marianne Smith at the head. This society undertook to collect clothes, to sew, knit, embroider, etc., to clothe the poor, and to hold a fair yearly for the sale of fancy articles. The money thus acquired was distributed to the poor, the widows, and the orphans. The society was very popular, and did a great deal of good.

The suits had been decided, and peace seemed to return; but the party hatred and fanaticism were unconquerable. Albany was divided into two Jewish factions that never came into contact with each other; hence personal attacks and insults were now out of

the question. Peace and quiet ruled seemingly. A spirit of heartiness prevailed in the new congregation, whose members were all of one way of thinking, and closely attached to one another. There was not the slightest disturbance in the congregation or among the members as long as I was in Albany. A new bond of friendship came into being with the new congregation.

Shortly after my return home I began to write the articles I had promised to Horace Greeley. I desired to use the opportunity to come to a definite understanding with orthodoxy, and to show that it had no future. I wanted to express myself fully, tersely, and determinedly. This takes time. I wrote, or rather I thought out, what I wished to say for several weeks. Mrs. F.'s witch-like poem kept revolving in my brain, and perplexed me. "Can I not eat, drink, and enjoy life as well as others? wherefore struggle and fight continually?" I asked myself repeatedly; and then I would write further, but protested against the rival in my own bosom. I had to confess that at least two demons had their seat within me. This brought the witch-like poem again to the surface. I had almost finished the article, when I received a letter from Robert Lyons, the publisher of the Jewish weekly, the *Asmonean*. He wrote me that Mrs. F. had convinced him that I was the man of the future for American Judaism, and that it was vain and sinful to oppose me. He had been told the same thing by others. He himself was orthodox; but he did not wish to stand in the light of the future of American Judaism. Therefore he offered me the



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editorship of his paper, and would devote himself to the belletristical department altogether.

Here I stood again at the parting of the ways. I had been abused in Albany. Should I subject myself to similar experiences again at the hands of all the world, or should I eat, drink, play, be merry, and enjoy life, and let Judaism take care of itself? I struggled for a long time, and could come to no decision. "Do not be egotistical," said I to myself. "He who lives for himself alone moves in a narrow sphere; he who serves a cause allies himself to humanity, subordinates his ego to his ideals, lives a thousandfold larger life." "But you have wife and children to whom also you belong," thus ran my thoughts; "if you cast yourself into this wild stream, think what your dear ones will lose; think how you will have to neglect them." I could reach no decision. Finally I appealed to the highest oracle, my wife, to whose intuition I frequently subordinated my doubts and questionings. I explained the matter to her in all its aspects, whereupon she spoke the fateful words: "In God's name, devote yourself to humanity. I will be satisfied with your hours of leisure. I will rear your children and conduct your household." The next morning I wrote to Robert Lyons, and accepted the editorship.

The fun now began. One Friday morning the ultra-orthodox Polish-English paper, the only Jewish organ beside the monthly magazine, *The Occident*, appeared with the name of the traduced of all traducers at its head, and filled from end to end with bold attacks upon fallow orthodoxy; yes, full of progressive

ideas and projects of reform, of earnestness, fire, and lightning. A cry of dismay escaped the abused and betrayed orthodox party. Robert Lyons was bombarded with threats and letters; but all to no avail. I poured hot shot week after week into the wavering ranks of the opposition, until I had repaid with interest all the slights and insults of the past six months. Only then I felt calmer and more forgiving.

In this manner I became an editor almost against the will of my other self. I have often regretted the step, and yet I have never been able to get out of the shackles. Since the days of Saul of Tarsus, who carried nascent Christianity into Asia Minor, no sensible person has undertaken to travel far and wide, to quarrel with everybody, to scold, to endure so many attacks, threats, insults, and defamation on behalf of Judaism as did I, simply because I was so unfortunate as to be an editor, an idealist, and an optimist; because, too, I was unfortunate enough to be able to talk and write better than my enemies, and because I was more honest than those that envied me. I have often regretted that I did not choose a more tranquil career; but I was now in the current; it was out of the question to turn back. Mrs. F. was chiefly to blame. May God in his mercy forgive the good woman!

Having found everything running smoothly in the congregation, the school, and my family upon my return, I was enabled to turn my attention to my non-Jewish friends, and to thank them for their kindly intervention in my behalf at Washington. All of

them were satisfied with the resolution I had taken, except Dr. Beck. This gentleman was the chancellor and superintendent of the schools of New York State. He was renowned as a mathematician and natural scientist, and was as enthusiastic for science as I for Judaism. He chided me in no gentle manner, for such was his nature. He had hoped that I would devote myself to scientific pursuits while stationed in the Congressional Library. When I informed him further that I had undertaken the editorship of a Jewish paper he grew excited, and said bluntly: "Now you are lost; you will accustom yourself to writing newspaper articles, mere ephemeral productions, and in a few years you will be a skillful scribbler, such as they all are, unable to think out or to write anything of lasting worth. Whoever wishes to achieve, must write but little." He is right, mused I, and I will remember what he says. Earnest study will be the means whereby I will protect myself from stagnating. The dogmatic contentions of the past summer had awakened in me a feeling of insecurity in regard to philosophical matters, and I resolved to devote myself to a thorough study of the Jewish philosophers. I went to work immediately. The first thing that I did was, as a matter of course, to study carefully the books on this subject that were in my possession. These were at best quite insignificant in number. I was not content to rest here. I was determined to investigate the subject thoroughly. Hence, after I had noted the small stock of Jewish philosophical books in my own library, I made a complete list

of the best books on the history and philosophy of the Middle Ages. Whichever of these books was not in the State Library had to be ordered at once.

I went bravely to work. I was enabled to overcome the difficulties with which I met, because all possible aids were available. The library ordered every book that I wanted. I was already accustomed to comparative studies, because of my former work in mythology. I pursued the same comparative method with the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan mediæval philosophers, and gained an insight into the thought of the Middle Ages. I became more and more convinced that the Jewish thinkers had exerted an influence in the domain of philosophy up to the time of the Reformation. This fact had never been pointed out. It was my desire to bring this to public notice. Upon mature deliberation, I resolved to write a history of the Middle Ages, and to set forth therein the significance of Jewish thought. I began collecting material at once. The scholars and literati who frequented the library, seeing me buried in the dust of the Middle Ages, made sport of me; but I did not permit myself to be diverted. I persevered in the work, devoted all my leisure hours to it, and was firmly resolved to write the book. The question whether I was competent to write such a work was a side issue, because I rarely asked myself whether I was competent to do this or that after I had determined upon it. I said to myself continually: "A person can learn whatever he does not know, and whatever he can not accomplish in one year can be achieved in five or ten years. Patience, industry, per-

severance, and a little ability will overcome all obstacles." And I would certainly have written the book had it not been for certain future events, which will be narrated in due time. Amos Dean, it is true, advised me frequently not to write for a while. He held the opinion that no one ought to write a book before he reached his fortieth year.

Undisturbed peace and perfect satisfaction reigned in my congregation, as well as in my family, so that there was nothing to disturb me in my work. The suits continued to arouse much acrimony, nor was there any lack of disagreeable and even laughable occurrences during the trials; however, these things troubled me but little. My suit against Louis Spanier ended in the conviction of the *parnass*, as was to be expected. The verdict was one thousand dollars damages and costs. I never received the one thousand dollars, because I did not want them. It was enough for me that the law had decided that my conduct was lawful, while my opponent's acts were illegal. This decision led to an amicable settlement of all other difficulties, and the suits were dismissed. True, I still had enemies galore; but they met me no more. I had nothing to do with them, and lived in peace.

The matter must have cost Spanier several thousands of dollars. It was a severe blow to his pride to be condemned to pay so large a price, and to be publicly branded as a lawbreaker; yet this was not his greatest punishment. It was still more disagreeable for him that he had to remain *parnass* of the *Bethel* congregation for some time longer, and to

associate with people whom he looked down upon from his aristocratic height, and of whom he was ashamed when they came to his house. He retired shortly thereafter, left Albany, and died a few years later in his prime. May God forgive his sins! I have forgiven him long ago. If I mistake not, the whole family has died out. If, however, any member of the family is still living, I beg him or them to consider me a friend, and to turn to me trustingly in case of need.

Peace ruled in Albany, and my friend, Henry Blattner, comforted me with these words: "The more you are persecuted, the greater you will become. Had it not been for Saul's persecution, David would not have become king of Israel." But I was a very insignificant person, and I was afraid of all the persecutions that would have to take place in order to make me great. I thought it better to remain insignificant without persecutions, than to become great through hard and bitter strife. No honors can compensate for slights and heart-burnings. Wounds leave scars, and these ache whenever the weather changes.

Although I could now pursue the even tenor of my way, everything being at peace, yet the editorship of the *Asmonean* consumed much time. I desired to achieve something noteworthy. My articles on reform could not be the *piece de resistance*, because I had to count on various classes of readers, and besides continued harping on the same theme grows monotonous, and misses its aim. Therefore I wrote three lengthy essays, "The *Bath Qol*," included later

in part in my "Origin of Christianity;" a biography of the first Hillel, as the precursor of Jesus; and "The Jewish Constitution, based on the Code of Maimonides." Nothing was known in this country of the German Jewish literature. Hence I was compelled to translate in order to bring the names of our German litterateurs to public notice. I translated successively the chapter on the Book of Chronicles in Zunz's *Gottesdienstliche Vortraege der Juden*, Geiger's *Divan des Jehuda Halevi*, Frankel's *Der Gerichtliche Beweis*, etc., and various writings of Rapaport, Reggio, Luzzatto, Krochmal, Munk, Carmoly, Holdheim, Jost, and Graetz (from his magazine). In addition, I published weekly a rabbinical legend from Talmud or Midrash. This had to be rendered from the original sources. I was the first to introduce the column of foreign news, a feature which was adopted in England in imitation of my plan. The Talmudical excerpts cost me but little effort, because I remembered much from my youthful studies. But the writing took a great deal of time. I lacked the mechanical perfection which one gains only through practice. I had to work till twelve o'clock almost every night.

My sorest trial lay in the many letters I received, all of which I thought had to be answered. I was praised and blamed, lifted to the skies and trampled into the dust; was called by this one the Messiah, by that one Satan. I was advised, helped, threatened, cursed, and prophesied about. In short, I was fairly bombarded. Compliments and detractions, laudatory poems and caricatures, followed each other in such quick succession that finally I lost all patience, and

threw the whole batch into the fire, answered no more communications, and paid no attention to them. "You shall not lead me astray," I soliloquized. "Providence has placed me in a responsible position. I will try to prove myself worthy of it in accordance with my convictions and my powers. I would rather continue teaching school and retain my independence, than lose my independence and self-respect as an editor. If I can not do as I will, I will retire. I will not be the servant of the public if I have the ability to teach. Either the prevalent opinion must succumb to me, or I will cease writing." This was my resolution, and I acted accordingly.

There were some characteristic letters which I did not burn, among them several from Mrs. F., who had made me an editor. Shortly after my acceptance of the editorship she wrote me: "Until now you have been for me Hamlet in the pulpit. I have designated you thus in my album, and I have written underneath, 'Truth is stranger than fiction.' You were enveloped in such a cloud of poetry while in the pulpit that I learned to know but one aspect of your nature. The other aspect appears in your written articles. These strengthen my conviction that all men are malicious. Perhaps malice must be met with malice; perhaps malice can be feigned. I beg of you to have regard for your tender fingers, which are worthy of preservation even without my ring, if only to answer my letters diligently, whenever you remove rocks and uproot mountains in order to storm the orthodox heaven and to dethrone the rabbinical Zeus. The savage element must be removed from

all men, either by pouting or kissing. Tell your dear wife that I advise her to study her rôle as wife better. I have completely civilized my dear husband; but I would not undertake a like Herculean labor again at any price," etc. Mrs. F. often wrote me still more malicious letters; but I remained in her debt as little as I did in that of my opponents. I truly paid "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

The winter of 1851 found me so engrossed in study and work that I had little time to devote to pleasure and amusement. True, I attended occasionally the meetings of the Literary Society, where I met my intimate friends for half an hour's chat; but it was always late at night, sometimes between eleven and twelve o'clock, when I went there. I read a paper but seldom at the meetings, and I was able to attend the entertainments still less frequently. I went to New York occasionally; but never without continuing my labors on board the steamer, so that I became a veritable literary machine. I was healthy, happy, and untroubled by cares. The springtide enticed me into the fields and the woods. I reveled in them for a week, and then returned to my work.

During the summer events took place which made the future of the young *Anshe Emeth* congregation look very bright. The Quaker Schoolcraft, who, as I have mentioned already, was a member of Congress, became the guardian of the family of his deceased brother, who had left a not inconsiderable fortune. Among his effects was that Baptist church in which the young clergyman had spoken so fanatically against the Jews and Judaism four years previously.

The church was large, well-built, stood in the center of the southern part of the city, and contained everything necessary for a temple, except an ark for the *Torah*. Schoolcraft was an outspoken opponent of the Baptists, and very friendly to the Jews. He offered to sell us the church cheap, and on easy terms. The congregation accepted the offer at once, and bought the church. The new reform congregation was established firmly. It came into possession of one of the largest churches in the city, containing about one thousand seats. It was well furnished, had an organ and family pews, schoolroom, vestry-room, dwelling etc.; everything in prime condition. Great enthusiasm reigned in the congregation when we took possession of the building in August. Everybody was eager to work, to toil, and to offer something to the cause. A beautiful *aron haqqodesh* was placed in the building, not towards the sun rising, however. The women made a handsome *parokheth*, a cover for the *Torah*, etc. The day of the dedication, towards which everybody was looking joyfully, arrived finally. Dr. Lilienthal was invited to deliver the German oration, in order to give me the opportunity to explain to the world in English the significance of the new movement in Judaism. The choir had rehearsed for two months. Everything was in readiness, all State and city officials were invited. The scholars and literati of the library; in truth, all the most prominent people of the city were present when the new temple, in all its splendor and glory, was dedicated as a Jewish house of worship. It was a day of ecstatic enthusiasm for us, an hour of atonement and

heartfelt *rapprochement* between the Jews and the most cultured non-Jews of the city of Albany. The proceedings were reported far and wide through the agency of the press. It was perhaps the first time in America that progressive Judaism had had an opportunity to speak forth its doctrines in earnest, fiery words, which were reproduced a hundred-fold and spread broadcast. The most bigoted among the orthodox had stationed sentinels to warn strangers not to enter the temple; but it was too late, a new spirit had breathed upon the people. The temple became the center for all Jews and all liberal non-Jews. It was regarded as a rising sun, which shed new light and contained the promise and potency of new life. Naturally the jubilation among the temple people was inexpressible at their scarcely credible success after but one year's existence. The non-Jewish world sympathized with us, since we alone were actuated by regard for the needs and the spirit of the age, and matters reached such a pass that merchants who were members of another congregation or of none had to deny this fact to their beautiful female customers, because these took for granted that every decent Jew had to belong to the new congregation.

My numerous friends among the non-Jewish population of Albany pilgrimed in great numbers to the temple to greet resurrected Israel, and to express their hearty sympathy with us. Mrs. F. came from Philadelphia in company with friends, a half-dozen cultured women, in order to offer us her felicitations in person. A veritable deluge of greetings and congratulations came from New York in words like the

following: "A new star has arisen in Jacob;" "A new light shines upon Zion;" "It was evening, and it was morning;" "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," etc.

American Judaism is indebted to the *Anshe Emeth* congregation of Albany for one important reform; viz., family pews. The church-building had family pews, and the congregation resolved unanimously to retain them. This innovation was imitated later in all American reform congregations. This was an important step, which was severely condemned at the time. The Jewish woman had been treated almost as a stranger in the synagogue; she had been kept at a distance, and had been excluded from all participation in the life of the congregation, had been relegated to the gallery, even as was the negro in Southern churches. The emancipation of the Jewish woman was begun in Albany, by having the Jewish girls sing in the choir, and this beginning was reinforced by the introduction of family pews.

American Judaism is indebted to these two reforms, which were bitterly opposed, for good music, decorum, and quiet in the house of worship, as well as for the interest and affection of our wives and our daughters for the synagogue. Every impartial person acknowledges at present how much these reforms contributed to the ennobling of the service, to the strengthening of the spirit of devotion, and particularly to the enhancing of the religious self-consciousness of our women. But at that time these steps were deemed unlawful innovations. We, however, pursued the even tenor of our way, paying no heed to the mutterings of our opponents.

An important question soon arose as to whether it was permissible to use the organ on *Yom Kippur*, since we had a number of honorable members who had conscientious scruples. Our amiable friend, Maier Freund, was looked upon as the representative of that sentiment, and he was asked, "Maier, have you heard what they intend to do now? They intend to use the organ even on *Yom Kippur*." Our Maier answered in great astonishment, "If the organ is not to be played on *Yom Kippur*, our holiest day, of what use is it?" That was enough for us. The organ was heard on *Yom Kippur*, accompanying the songs of Sulzer and Naumburg. There was no protest or dissent.

The difference between the two days in the years 1850 and 1851 was so great, that I spoke on the evening of *Yom Kippur* before God and the congregation in so inspired and inspiring a manner that I have never succeeded in equaling it since. I saw God's favor revealed in peace, joy, progress, and enthusiasm, and I thanked and praised him from the depth of my soul. My feelings found expression in a flow of words the like of which I have never been able to utter since. I tried to write down the sermon on the following day; but I did not succeed. The enthusiasm born of the moment can not be committed to paper later. I could retain the shadow only; the spirit had flown. The power of the living word is wrongly called the magnet of the speaker. This is not true. When the spirit rises aloft, when feelings master the heart, words are spoken or written for which the orator is really not responsible.

The best productions of mouth or pen to which I have given utterance have been, not the results of careful contemplation, but the flashes of momentary inspiration. In such moments I have spoken and written thoughts which I scarcely recognized as my own in calmer moments. I am unable to write a line of poetry for years; suddenly I am deeply roused by an event, or I am seized by some deep feeling, then the strophes flow from my pen as though a higher Being guided my hand, and I must needs force myself not to write and speak poetry constantly. This has always been a riddle to me, and Eduard von Hartman has not been able to enlighten me. I have given productions of this kind to various friends, who I hope will guard them faithfully until I am no longer among the living. This is in all likelihood a fourth demon which Mrs. F. did not take into account. The dedication of the *Anshe Emeth* Temple was such an event for me. I scarcely recognize as my own the thoughts I jotted down at that time. However, the time of sober work was again before me, and that, too, in an entirely new field, requiring great exertion. I soon found myself in my accustomed place at the library, in the company of the great spirits of all the ages.

XI

I HAVE stated that Mrs. F. and some other ladies had come to Albany to be present at the dedication of the temple. Miss G. was one of the most prominent of these visitors. She was the sweetheart of the celebrated author, Washington Irving. Since he was not a Jew, and she would not marry a Christian, they both remained unmarried, but carried on an active correspondence with one another to the end of their lives. This Miss G. was the original of Walter Scott's Rebecca in Ivanhoe. The great novelist pictured her faithfully, although he knew her only from her portrait, her letters, and the oral description of Washington Irving.*

These ladies, all of whom were Portuguese Jewesses, importuned me to write a history of the Jews instead of a history of the Middle Ages. I had communicated my purpose to Mrs. F. some time before,

*This statement embodies the commonly accepted belief of former days concerning the relation existing between Irving and Rebecca Gratz, who the Miss G. mentioned in the "Reminiscences" evidently is. Dr. Wise recounts what was then matter of current opinion; however, it has been established that Miss Gratz was the intimate friend of Irving's fiancée, Matilda Hoffman, at whose death-bed she was present. The friendship was continued by Irving, who described his beautiful and cultured Jewish friend to Walter Scott. The great Scotch novelist formed his conception of Rebecca from the description Irving had given him of the lovely American Jewess.—[ED.

and she had requested me to devote myself rather to writing Jewish history. Upon my refusal, she sent her well-instructed agents to convince me. When I persisted in the pursuance of my original plan, she came with this bevy of Portuguese Jewesses to persuade me.

Any one who does not know this peculiar class of American women may consider this proceeding strange. American women exercise great influence in religious matters. This is also the case often with the native-born Jewesses of Portuguese descent. In addition, they are very proud of their descent. They lay the greatest stress on the genealogical tree. They are Jews and Jewesses from pride of ancestry. Hence Jewish history is of prime importance in their eyes. They like to hear about the Jewish worthies of aforetime. The princes of Judah and the heroes of the olden days are of great interest to them, because their blood flows through the veins of the present generation of Jews. Ancestral pride of birth has been beaten out of the German and the Polish Jews with whip and knout; but it has persisted in these American Portuguese. Then, as now, there were but few works on Jewish history in the English language, and therefore Mrs. F. desired that I, willy nilly, should undertake this task. I expressed my doubts as to my powers and protested my inability, but all to no avail; I had to submit. If any man living can succeed in holding his own in the face of the opposition of six women, I can but admire and congratulate him; for I was not able to do so. Mrs. F. and her bodyguard would not desist until I promised to be-

gin my studies in Jewish history at once. Therefore I had to begin with *B'reshith* once again in the winter of 1852. May God forgive this woman all her sins, and also this one! First she made a Jewish editor of me, and then also a Jewish historian. From that hour on I ceased to be free and unconcerned. I had to study and write constantly. I was confined indoors, had to leave the management of the school to the congregation almost entirely, and acquired a new ailment; viz., chronic absent-mindedness, so that frequently I could not distinguish between the hat and the hat-box, and put the latter on my head in place of the former. My wife found it necessary to inspect me every time I left the house. If it happened that I escaped without submitting myself to her inspection, I was sure to be laughed at; for there was certain to be something odd about my costume. I disliked to be considered eccentric, and hence submitted with childlike humility to the surveillance of my wife. A person as absent-minded and dreamy as I was required a guardian indeed.

Since the most profound peace and satisfaction ruled in the congregation, and my superiority to my opponents in my editorial capacity was assured, there was nothing of particular importance to jot down in my diary. I noted two occurrences that took place in the winter of 1852, which were as follows: On January 2, 1852, a resolution was passed in both Houses of the Legislature of the State of New York to the effect that the clergymen of the city of Albany be asked to hold a meeting to prepare a list of all the ministers stationed in the city, and submit

it to the Senate, in order that chaplains for both Houses might be elected. The resolution was printed and a copy sent to every minister; hence also to me. On the following day I read to my astonishment in the evening paper that a meeting of ministers had taken place. The list that had been prepared by them was appended. It was to be submitted to the Senate on the morrow. My name was not on the list.

"Ye miserable hypocrites, I will teach you a lesson, mused I. I went to the clerk of the Senate, and acquainted him with the proceeding. "Very well; write a short protest, and hand it to me," said he. wrote the protest and gave it to him. The next morning the report of the clergy, accompanied by my protest, was read in the Senate chamber, and was rejected on the ground that it did not comply with the law. The ministers ought to have called a second meeting, and to have invited me to be present. Instead of that, they prepared a protest against the action of the Senate on the ground that I was not one of their number, saying that I was a Jewish rabbi and not a Christian minister. Dr. Wykoff objected, was outvoted, left the meeting, came straight to my house, and informed me of the action. The protest had to be printed; so I went to the different newspaper offices, found the document, read it through, wrote a reply, had it printed at once, and on the following morning the protest and my reply were lying on each desk. This caused no end of merriment. One of the senators said that I must be a prophet since I had answered a document point

for point even before it had appeared. Upon the opening of the session the clerk announced the receipt of the two documents, but they were not read nor filed since the Senate did not wish to lend official notice to the protest prepared by the clergy. After this was disposed of, my friend, Senator Thayer, arose and moved that I be appointed chaplain of the Senate temporarily until the clergy should have obeyed the law. This motion was carried unanimously without debate. The clergymen made wry faces; but I was chaplain of the Senate until such a time as they would act in accordance with the law and place the name of the terrible rabbi upon the list, a step which they could not make up their minds to take for a long time. Thus I became the first Jewish chaplain of a legislative body. I held the position as long as I was in Albany.

The other event was as follows: A number of young people who had formed a literary society in New York invited me to deliver a lecture before them. I went to New York, lectured in the Chinese Assembly Rooms before a very large audience, and was heartily applauded by the young people. The next day a friend, Joseph Levy, called and informed me that a society consisting of natives of Posen, whereof he was president, would celebrate its anniversary on the following evening, for which event he had brought me an official invitation. At the same time he requested me to respond to the toast "Education." I accepted the invitation, and promised to speak on the subject as requested. In the evening I learned that the society consisted of

dyed-in-the-wool orthodox people, and that it was their purpose to insult me. I was advised to keep away. The next morning I went to a Jewish antiquarian and bought a *Sefer hachayim* printed in Posen, in which there was a diagram of the cemetery of Posen, together with a copy of all the principal epitaphs. I memorized a dozen of these. Now I felt prepared for the fray, and went to the banquet that night. I met there Drs. Illowy and Raphall and Rev. Isaacs. They all wore little velvet skull-caps; I did not. The guests sat down, the banquet was finished, the annual report was read, and Dr. Illowy delivered an address in which he attacked the reform movement and myself sharply. He was applauded loudly. This encouraged Dr. Raphall, who was the next speaker. He was still more severe, and Isaacs improved even upon him. The president, who sat next to me, gnashed his teeth with rage; but I swallowed the bitter pills with good grace. Finally the toast on "Education" was announced, and the president introduced me. The fun began. Glasses and bottles clashed, knives and forks became restless, plates and dishes struck each other in inimical fashion, the feet under the tables began to stamp, conversation rose to a loud pitch; in short, they made as much noise as they could, in order to prevent my being heard. "Quiet, gentlemen! Order, gentlemen!" shouted the poor, troubled president a number of times; but all in vain. The more loudly he called for order, the more noisy grew the assembly. "Sit down," Mr. President," said I; "these people have to deal with Wise, of Albany. I will

bring them to order." The good man, embarrassed beyond expression, sat down, and I shouted to the noisy throng: "Friends, has any one of you ever been in the *Beth hachayim* of Posen?" "O yes," answered some forty or fifty voices; "I have been there." I repeated the question so often until they all had answered yes. The dread recollections of the *Beth hachayim* now mastered the assembly, and a grave-like stillness ruled. I continued: "Who can call to mind that high tombstone upon which this inscription may be read?" I then recited six of the most important epitaphs in so sepulchral a tone that the assemblage began to shiver. When I noticed that all of them were waiting for the next word, I put the query, "Why do we honor the men whose epitaphs I have just recited so highly? Because they were masters of Jewish learning. They were choice products of education." And in this way I came to my theme, which I treated exhaustively. After finishing this, I thundered against all the obscurantists and night-owls who obstructed the progress of humanity. I hurled poisoned barbs of speech at my opponents. The crowd, now thoroughly converted, shouted approval. It seemed as though the applause and bravos would never end after I sat down. Some one shouted, "That fellow has a thousand devils in him." "Aha!" thought I, "he has an even worse opinion of me than Mrs. F., who scented but three demons in me." Afterwards the doctors, reverends, and saints came to me and confessed that it was unwise to begin quarreling with me. Since that time I have had quite a number of friends and admirers

among the Poseners. It requires a certain amount of boldness to act as I did; but I had grown accustomed to being a war-horse. I never lose my self-control. "I am your master." I never permit myself to be rebuffed or frightened. Opposition merely whets effort and arouses energy. Courage grows in battle.

If a person lacks all diplomacy and is utterly regardless of consequences as I was, if he pushes on thoughtlessly and directly to the accomplishment of his aims, as I did in my innocence; if he is what is usually called "honest, but stupid," he ought to be placed under police surveillance. I was engaged in writing a history of Israel. The work had to be, not only published, but also sold. I knew that my standpoint was hateful to the public; therefore it should have been my object to gain friends and patrons. Any sensible person would have acted in this manner; but not I. Instead of that, I incurred the unforgiving enmity of the whole Jewish and Christian clergy. The articles I wrote as editor were responsible for this. Of course, I might have employed my editorial pen for my personal advantage, had I so desired. The state of affairs to which I allude was brought about in the following way:

In writing my history, I was compelled to devote many hours to Biblical studies. I selected all the passages which are usually quoted as evidences of Christianity by its supporters, studied them thoroughly, wrote a series of critical articles, and published them in the *Asmonean*. Besides the well-known passages in the Pentateuch, I took up all the

so-called Messianic psalms, the well-known passages in Isaiah, Joel, and Zachariah, as well as those in Samuel and Chronicles. I treated them exhaustively, and took away all support from under Christian exegesis. Several liberal and semi-liberal Christian papers reprinted the articles. Some sly editors published extracts, accompanied by denunciatory comments expressing horror at the conclusions presented. The orthodox papers stormed against the rationalistic, infidel, and paradoxical rabbi, and incited the whole Christian clergy against me. It was out of the question for me to enter the lists. Many dogs kill the rabbit. They attacked me, not with critical pens, but with whips and clubs.

On the other hand, I had been thoroughly convinced that thorough-going reforms would be possible in Judaism only if there would be a radical revolution in the character of the religious leaders, who were then mostly *chazanim.* In using this term, *chazan*, I do not wish to be understood as referring to the present-day cultured cantors, or to a teacher and preacher in a rural community of to-day, but to an uneducated person, who is butcher, cantor, and idler. With but few exceptions, this was the character of all who stood at the head of the congregations. They rendered no service worthy the name, because they were unable to do so. They slaughtered animals, sang their old melodies and new street songs in the synagogues, paid no attention to the young, knew very little about Judaism and still less about anything else, promoted superstition, enjoyed no one's respect, and were salaried congregational

evils. They were the blocks that obstructed the path of progress. "These will have to be removed," I mused, "cost what it may."

I took the first step immediately upon the opening of the new temple in Albany. I abolished the *chazan* and his sing-song, and substituted the plain reading of the prayers and the Bible. This has now been imitated generally. All the singing was done by the choir, and I myself read the prayers. I wrote strongly against the *chazanim* in the *Asmonean*, denouncing these idlers, and insisted that the congregations should engage teachers and preachers instead of *chazanim* and *shoch'tim*. I advised that competent men should be brought from Germany to fill the positions. I had declared war upon ignorance and indolence, and conducted the campaign with reckless boldness. This aroused the whole army of Jewish priestlets against me. They became my deadly enemies, even as the Christian clergy already was; hence judgment was pronounced upon me long before my book appeared.

My colleagues, who arrived later from Germany, have repaid me fully for this service with kicks and blows. As little as the Jews of America thought of the Jewish authors of Germany before I made their names known through the press, so little did it occur to any one to call a preacher from Germany until after I had advocated this for years; and the first one to be called was my successor in Albany. It was only after this that other congregations took similar action. I made their bed, laid them in it, and when they had become warmed they left no stone

unturned to discredit me before the public. True, they did not succeed in this; for I am still alive, I still write, and am still the spoiled darling of American Jewry. But I did not wish to speak of this. I only wanted to confess my rank stupidity. Instead of gaining friends so as to assure my success as a young author, I embittered the entire clergy. The liberal party among Christians as well as Jews was so weak that but little support could be looked for from that side.

After I had quite finished the first volume of the history from Abraham to the destruction of the first temple, had worked myself almost to death, and had fallen head over heels into debt, I wrote the introduction, in which my standpoint is clearly stated, and took the manuscript to New York in the spring of 1853. In spite of letters of recommendation from the most prominent men, such as Horace Greeley and William H. Seward, no publisher was willing to accept the work. I peddled it about for three days, visited every book-publisher and book-dealer, was received courteously everywhere; but as soon as I had read my introduction, the decision was pronounced as follows: "No one would buy such a godless book." This was the general judgment. After three days I returned home thoroughly humiliated. I wanted to go to Philadelphia in order to quarrel with Mrs. F., but my pride would not permit me to acknowledge that I had failed.

During my return journey I felt very despondent. The steamer *Rip Van Winkle* was too small for me. I flitted about restless as a bat until the captain forced

me finally to play chess with him. "What in thunder is the matter with you? You have lost your wits," he said to me. I then told him some impossible stories, but not the truth. He opened one bottle of champagne after the other, until he could no longer distinguish the chessmen. We then concluded to call it a drawn game. We now retired, but I did not sleep. Morning dawned upon me lying still awake. We arrived at Albany on time. I went home, but I had not the courage to awaken my wife. I was ashamed; for she had seen how steadily and enthusiastically I had worked. She knew how I had entered into the task with my whole heart and soul. "She will take my failure to heart," thought I. "Let me put off for several hours my own shame and her mortification." When she did receive me, I was my old self once again—calm, determined, the jolly companion. I depicted wonderful things. She believed all I said, and I rejoiced in her joy.

The scholars and literati of the library, who had grown into a sort of mutual admiration society, met in solemn council at noon. Whatever any one of us wrote pleased all the others, although we criticised and attacked one another mercilessly. Indignation ran high at the mercenary souls of New York who can not appreciate a soaring spirit, who do everything for money and nothing for literature, etc. Let Boston be tried. Boston has better taste, nobler feeling. Wood suggested that I pass as an American Christian in order to satisfy the stupid mob; but no definite conclusion was reached. I realized erelong that I would have to help myself, or

else give up the whole project. I wanted to be sure first of all, whether my work had any merit. I read portions of the manuscript to celebrated scholars, and then handed it for examination to impartial literary experts, with the definite understanding that no corrections were to be made. "If it is not good enough as it stands, it had better not be printed at all." After I had been assured by competent judges that the book ought to be printed, and Amos Dean had agreed with this decision, it did not take me long to make up my mind. "Since I have begun to write on Jewish matters, I shall not be dependent on the good will of each and every wretched publisher. I have no money," so my thoughts ran, "but there is money enough in the world. I have written a book, it is true, that will shock the whole world; but they will have to pay for it nevertheless. The free, unhampered thought must out into the world. If Judaism in America must depend on the calculations of a few publishers, it can never amount to anything. Forward, then, in God's name."

The next morning I closed a contract with a printer for two thousand copies of a book of four hundred pages octavo, to be printed on good paper, and to be neatly bound. The contract called for about two thousand dollars more than I possessed. While the book was in press, I told my friends of my rash undertaking. The faithful ones, who had stood manfully and fraternally by me in all my struggles—my old guard—did not fail me now. Within a few days several members of my congregation had subscribed sufficient to cover the whole indebtedness,

and had deposited the money for me in bank. Two thousand dollars was an enormous amount of money for Albany at that time, and every one understood that my undertaking was exceedingly risky; but my friends did not leave me in the lurch for all that. I may be permitted to say now that there was no one among all the Jews that had emigrated to America who had to fight such a coterie of bitter enemies as I; but, on the other hand, there is none other who can boast of having found such a host of true, steadfast, and intimate friends as did I.

In the summer of 1853 I was received into the company of Faust and Gutenberg's magicians. I had never learned witchcraft, it is true, nor was the secret power revealed to me of conjuring the devil; but I was initiated into the mystic brotherhood of the printers and typesetters. I was named a knight of the black art at J. Munsel's, No. 78 State Street, Albany. It cost me much beer and furnished me much sport, but I was an apt pupil and made rapid studies in the lofty art, so that I soon mastered the secrets of the letter-case and proof-reading. Correcting proof, reading proof, or whatever may be the technical term for this noble business, was my chief occupation that summer. Goethe tells us that he who never ate his bread in tears does not know the heavenly powers. Well, even Goethe did not know everything. Whoever has not read proofs set up by obstinate typesetters, who pay no attention to a correction, though it be made ten times, but trust to Providence that it may turn out all right, he knows you not, ye heavenly powers. Since that time, a

quarter of a century ago, I have never succeeded in getting away from the atmosphere of the printing-room. I have often execrated Gutenberg and all his apprentices. Whoever has given himself into the power of magic can never free himself from its bonds. The insane longing to consume printers' ink pursues him like an evil fate.

While I was being initiated into the black art, I did another foolish thing. I had engaged several traveling agents to secure subscribers for the book. In order to facilitate their work, I sent proof-sheets to various newspapers, so that the book was defamed sufficiently before it left the binder. Every scribbler attacked the unfortunate volume. A host of pious souls prodded me with pens and pencils, as though Satan had let loose all the legions of hell against me. They did not criticise the book; they found no mistakes, faults, nor errors in it; but they complained, howled, and lamented in ear-splitting fashion over my godlessness, infidelity, and irreligiosity. They called me heretic, an un-Jewish Jew, an anti-Christian, a German rationalist, a disciple of Spinoza, of Thomas Paine, and the devil; in short, they depicted me and my book in so monstrous a manner that I was compelled to laugh often and heartily at the prevailing stupidity. The Christians were even more bitter than the Jews. I was pleased beyond measure that rabid fanaticism could not point out a single mistake nor convict the foreigner of any errors in English style. I laughed at the manner in which my learning was exaggerated. On this account I was pronounced to be a most dangerous

person. It appeared to me extremely comical to find among the raging flood of condemnatory newspaper articles a letter from Theodore Parker, who praised the book highly, but regretted that it was too orthodox in tone; while Dr. Illowy, of blessed memory, published in the *Occident* a bull of excommunication in Hebrew against me and my book. Not a soul had the courage to take my part, and I was too proud to do so myself, until finally a physician—Dr. Arnold, of Baltimore—published an article in the *Occident* with the heading:

פלשתים עליך שמשון

"The Philistines are upon thee, Samson." This encouraged me somewhat, and I wrote thereupon several insignificant rejoinders in the *Asmonean*.

But wherefore this hue and cry? I had declared in the introduction that miracles do not belong to history, and I proceeded to explain the miracles as natural events. I described the revelation at Sinai word for word according to the sources, and added that the event was described thus in the Bible, but made no further comment. But this was not my worst sin in the eyes of my opponents. I wrote Jewish history from the democratic standpoint. In this I differed from all my predecessors; hence the monarchy was unjustified and contrary to the laws of Moses. If this was true, the Messianic belief of both Jews and Christians was without foundation. Therefore I had no reason to palliate the faults and weaknesses of David, Solomon, and the whole dynasty. I exposed all the intrigues of the court, and

pinned my faith to the prophets who had thundered against the kingdom and the kings. The faithful believers could not forgive me this, and yet I do not retract one word even to this day; and I have also lived to see how the twenty-five hundred copies of my book have worked a revolution within Judaism and Christianity. To-day the book is orthodox in very truth, as Theodore Parker asserted at that time; but at the time of its appearance it fell into the orthodox camp like a veritable bomb. It frightened the saints out of their wits, and the half-saints wrapped themselves in the mantle of sanctity and cried aloud: "See how holy we are, we who have not only not written such a book, but none at all! We have not only not read this book, but none at all." The host of sycophants increased from day to day, until all had become canonized and my book had been hounded to death.

But the seriousness of the situation became apparent particularly when the book was placed on sale. It had been defamed, the entire clergy was arrayed against me, and no liberal people seemed to be about. My agents sold scarcely sufficient copies to pay their expenses; the book lay in the bookstores unsold, and I was in dire straits. I had debts like an Austrian staff officer, and no prospect of paying them. What distressed me most was that I could not pay my friends the money they had advanced; and although my creditors were very lenient, and even offered me more money, I could not sleep for many nights, and I began to quarrel with myself and my insensate folly.

During all this time I had not heard a word from Mrs. F. She had spent the heated season in Scotland. I received a letter from her from Edinburgh at the beginning of August. She sent me a banknote of one hundred pounds sterling, and wrote me that if this were not sufficient, there was more at my disposal. She had gathered from the press that my book would not sell for two years, and she could well imagine my embarrassing monetary situation. This was followed by sympathetic, heartfelt expressions. She pitied me mercilessly, and in addition sent me her tears, her sighs, her hearty sympathy.

This was too much. I could endure everything—blows and kicks, mockery and derision, struggle and defeat, wounds and pains, anything—but not pity; my pride rebelled against this. I wrote her a very cordial letter, thanked her for her kind attention, and returned her the money lest it might be said that I was an object of pity to my friends.

This, however, neither changed my situation nor alleviated my cares. The worst feature of the case was that my wife discovered the true state of affairs and understood my misery in spite of all the care I took to hide the newspapers, and in spite also of my assumed jollity. She worried much more than I, because her disposition was milder than mine, and she could not hide her grief from me. She wanted to comfort me, and in doing so she laid bare the wounds of her own heart. This was exceedingly distressing for me. I found her in tears at one time. "What is the matter, dear child?" "You are so good, and the world treats you so shamefully," she answered.

It was as though I had received a dagger thrust. I could not overcome her mournful feeling either by flattery or kisses. I began to ponder and to consider: Is not the world too wicked to appreciate the truth? Is it not more sensible to look out for myself and to leave everything else to God? Here I thought of my friends, my faithful guard, and I had to acknowledge that the world is not so very wicked after all. Thereupon I had to confess to myself that the people were not at fault; for they had not harmed me, but that it was I who had thrown down the gauntlet to bigotry, orthodoxy, yes, to the whole pious crew. These were only protecting themselves. This is not wicked. Hence I had only myself and my own folly to blame. True, I was incensed at bigotry, but not at the bigots who desired to defeat their opponent.

While in this mood, I began to consider how I could improve my condition. "The situation shall and must change," I mused. "It is true that I have failed, but the old God still lives." While I was making new plans, I received a letter at the end of August, 1853, from an unknown gentleman, Mr. Jacob Goodheart, of Cincinnati, in which he asked me whether and on what conditions I would accept a call from the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation of Cincinnati. He assured me that I would be elected unanimously if the conditions would be agreeable.

"Do the people in the Far West not read the papers? Do they not know how discredited I am?" I looked upon the letter as a sorry jest. The congregation *B'ne Yeshurun* had quite a reputation, a fact

not unknown to me as editor of the *Asmonean*. Besides, I was personally acquainted with Abraham Aub, the deceased Griebel, Elias Mayer, and Lewis Abraham; and through them I had become quite familiar with Jewish conditions in Cincinnati. How can any congregation, only two of whose members I know personally, think for one moment of electing me as their rabbi in the present condition of affairs? The letter, methought, can be but a sorry jest. It occurred to me that there were two Albanians who were well acquainted in Cincinnati. I went to them—viz., Lederer and Strasser—and inquired concerning a certain Jacob Goodheart. "He is an honorable gentleman," said both of them, "a merchant in good standing." Perhaps some one forged his name, thought I, and went away. I then remembered that I had met a Mr. Goodheart in New York at Lehmayer's several times, and felt that I now had a definite clue. I took the envelope, sent it to New York to Moritz Lehmayer, and requested him to inform me whether he recognized the handwriting. I received a reply by return of mail to the effect that it was the handwriting of Jacob Goodheart, of Cincinnati, and that he was worthy of my fullest confidence. Now I began to ponder: "What does Providence wish me to do? The temple and the congregation here are built up and firmly established. My mission here is ended. Any one else can finish the work. I have three children, and am burdened with debts. Cincinnati lies in the center of the country. There in the West is a new world that comes into but little contact with the East. The people there

are young and aspiring and not yet cast into a fixed mold. Now I understand what I have to do. I shall go to Cincinnati, start a new weekly journal, give Judaism a new and powerful impetus, and avenge myself for the good of humanity on the narrow religious bigots, so that they will think of me for a century." My resolution was formed. All that was necessary was the consent of my wife. I pictured for her the present and the future with all the eloquence at my command. Carried away by my enthusiasm, she gave her consent. I wrote to Mr. Goodheart, and informed him that I would accept a life position in the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation, and would entertain no other proposition. At that time there was not a single Jewish clergyman in America who had been appointed for life. I wrote further that I would not preach any trial sermons, that I could enter upon the position not sooner than six months after I had resigned from my present post, and that my salary and my position must be such as to make me independent of any gifts from the rich or the poor members of my congregation. I despatched the letter, and thought that if the congregation accepted these conditions, it was sincere in its desire to have me despite my failure, stupidity, and bad reputation.

"Five days later I received a telegram signed by Jacob Goodheart, "You were elected unanimously last night at your own terms." It seemed to me as though I had dropped from the clouds. I could scarcely believe my eyes. When I read the telegram to my wife, she said, with tear-bedimmed eyes, "Your

reputation is not so bad as it would appear." "And the world is not as wicked as you thought," I wanted to add, but I did not. We were both happy as kings, not so much because of the position, but because of the manner in which it had been tendered me; for this was a practical proof that the situation was not half as bad as we had feared. The world was still full of hope.

XII

TWO days after I had received the above-named telegram, the official and unofficial letters arrived from Cincinnati. The official communications, signed by Moritz Fischel, the secretary of the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation, and by Lehmann Hollstein, the secretary of the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute, notified me that I had been unanimously elected rabbi of the congregation and superintendent of the institute, and that the congregation had imposed no conditions whatsoever, so that I was enabled to enter upon both positions unhampered and untrammeled. This was quite a step in advance; for at that time the bad custom of prescribing certain duties and conditions for the newly-elected official was in vogue. Another triumphant achievement consisted in the fact that I had been elected for life, the first time this had taken place in America, and further, at a salary of fifteen hundred dollars, which was five hundred dollars more than any other of my colleagues in America received. Jacob Goodheart, Henry Mack, and others, informed me in private communications that my election by the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation was considered a victory for reform, and that the orthodox element without the congregation mourned and prophesied disaster. It was very desirable, they wrote, for me to come to Cincinnati during the

winter, to keep the enthusiasm alive, for the following reasons: This orthodox element exerted considerable influence on some members of the congregation; further, six months were to transpire between my election and my assumption of the office; besides, the congregation did not know me personally, had never heard me speak, and had elected me only because of my reputation.

I now resigned my position in Albany, the resignation to take effect in six months. I requested my friends not to attempt to induce me to change my resolution; and I succeeded in convincing the leading men that the cause of progress in Judaism, as well as the welfare of my family, forced me to take this step. We finally agreed to advertise the position in Germany, and to elect for three years the candidate who would be recommended by Drs. Philippson and Stein. The congregation indorsed this action. Thereupon I wrote to Cincinnati and accepted the two positions.

When my opponents learned this, they were furious, and denounced me and the heretical congregation of Cincinnati in the bitterest terms. I remained silent, and resigned as editor of the *Asmonean*, but only to sharpen my weapons, so as to have them ready for use at the proper time. "Wait, you miserable fellows, wait," I mused. "When my time shall have come, I will belabor you with blows that will bring you to your senses." Wonderful to say, all this caused my book to be sought for more than ever. Thus my financial condition began to improve,

and I was enabled to commence to liquidate my debts.

I recognized clearly that I would have to go to Cincinnati during the winter. Upon receiving invitations from various societies to attend their anniversary celebrations at the end of December (Chanukkah), I determined to go to Cincinnati at that time and to sojourn there several weeks.

Shortly before journeying West, I went to New York. They did not know there that there were four congregations in Cincinnati with a strong reform party. They knew only that there was a powerful orthodox party in Cincinnati. Cincinnati was pictured to me as an orthodox center, and one of my dearest friends said to me: "If you want to go to Cincinnati, buy at once new *t'fillin* with large *battim*, a *tallith*, and a thick *machzor;* for you will need them all." I did not follow his advice, but I went to Cincinnati in December. Dr. A. Rosenfeld, who had practiced medicine in Cincinnati a short time, and Isidor Kalisch, rabbi in Cleveland, traveled westward with me. It was very cold. The frozen ground was covered with a deep snow, but all went well till we arrived near Erie, in Northern Pennsylvania. Here we found the tracks torn up for a distance of six miles from the town, and the bridges burned down by an enraged mob because of a quarrel with the railroad company. After sitting for several hours in the cold, we were packed into wagons like herring, and were driven for two or three hours in the biting atmosphere to Erie. I was taken sick, and hesitated

about continuing the journey. Rabbi Kalisch had been absent from his family for a long time, and had to leave that same evening. Dr. Rosenfeld and I remained in Erie. It was fortunate that the physician was with me. He treated me during the night so successfully that it was possible to continue the journey the next afternoon, but only as far as Cleveland. We spent the night with Rabbi Kalisch. The physician continued his treatment during the night, and the next morning, Thursday, we were able to continue our journey to Cincinnati, where we arrived late at night and went to the old Woodruff House, opposite the National Theater, since I had apprised no one of my coming. I wished to avoid all excitement and formality. I sent my card the next morning to the presiding officers of the congregation—Marcus Fechheimer and Jacob L. Miller—and to the president of the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute, Solomon Friedmann. The Reception Committee came at nine o'clock, and took me to the house of Marcus Fechheimer, corner Longworth (known as Center Street in those days) and Race Streets. Dr. Rosenfeld was taken in charge by Mr. Solomon Levi.

My reception seemed very hearty and well-meant, and I felt at home at once in the Fechheimer house. That very day and evening all the prominent members of the congregation visited me and welcomed me heartily. It is difficult to determine at this time what impression I made upon the people. I was thin; my face was pale, my eyes were deep set and encircled with blue rings; my hair was long and flowing; my glances were fiery, my lips colorless; my

figure was bent and insignificant. I spoke only when I had to, and even then very little. I never experienced the desire to make myself agreeable. I had weaned myself almost altogether from association with the world. I am willing to wager that the people took me for an out-and-out *schlemihl;* for a frank and exceedingly amiable woman who, sad to say, is no more, and with whom I became acquainted the very first day, said to me on the following Sunday: "If one sees you in the pulpit and then meets you outside of the synagogue, one would scarcely recognize you; you look so different." It then occurred to me that the lady thought that outside of the synagogue I looked like a *schlemihl.* I am constrained to say further that the departed looked like Mrs. F., and spoke and acted as she did; but she was much younger. We remained friends till the sad day when I had to follow her to the grave. A tear to her memory! Her name was Lena Stix. She was a noble woman.

Although I was well pleased with everything, notably my unanimous election and the standpoint of the congregation, as it had been explained to me in private letters; still I could not dismiss from my mind what had been told me in New York about the religious conditions in Cincinnati. "Let me become better acquainted with the people, let me gain their good will, if possible, and then discuss religious principles with them and come to a clear understanding before I bring my family here and enter upon a new field of labor." I determined to be discreet and circumspect this time. On the Sabbath everybody

was in the synagogue. Although the saints who laid two pair of *t'fillin* daily had gone to their friends and had warned them not to go to the synagogue, since to hear me was worse than *sh'mad*, nevertheless there were as many people in the synagogue as could find room. In the absence of the cantor, Mr. Solomon Levi conducted the services in an old-fashioned but very dignified manner. The *shamash* did excellently well on that day; for every *mitzvah* brought a good price, and, instead of seven, nine men were called up to the *Torah* exceptionally, each one of whom *shnodered* liberally. The whole service appeared droll to me, although the people impressed me very favorably. I had resolved to be careful and considerate, and I remained true to my resolution. I scattered so many blossoms and flowers upon the congregation from the pulpit, used so many flowers of speech and so much poetical imagery that there were enough bouquets to go around, and every one went home bedecked. I had not said one word about principles; but my reputation as a speaker was established at once, my fortune was made; even the semi-orthodox were won over. I was satisfied with my success, and the congregation was overjoyed at not having been deceived in its choice. They desired to have a preacher who could speak well in both English and German, and they believed that they had succeeded in procuring such a one. The beginning was good, and on Saturday afternoon I was praised and complimented very much and very extravagantly.

Perhaps I would have been discreet and polite

some time longer, and would have tried to conciliate the orthodox party, had I not been provoked by a certain tactless person, who did not know that I never refused to accept a challenge. Let me describe the incident:

The benevolent society celebrated its anniversary on Sunday evening. Covers were laid for about two hundred people at Bernheimer's. The members of the various congregations were present in goodly numbers. Food and drink were good, and at the close of the meal the traditional *n'barekh lelohenu* was recited. Immediately thereafter the business of the evening was broached. A number of toasts had been officially announced. I was to speak on charity, and the donations were to be collected after my address. Two speakers were to precede and two to follow me. The second toast was "Our Country," responded to by ——, an ultra-orthodox Englishman and a practiced speaker. He said not one word on the subject assigned to him, but devoted his remarks altogether to a scathing denunciation of the progressionists and the world-improvers, of the desire for novelty and sensation, so that all eyes were directed towards me. The English element was still very prominent in Cincinnati at that time, and was well represented at the banquet.

After he had taken his seat triumphantly, the toast on charity was announced, and I was introduced. I began as follows, without one prefatory word: "Once upon a time the frogs complained that they could find no rest nor peace; nay, more, that they could not sleep, for the earth revolved unceasingly.

Some wise frogs interested themselves in the matter, and a general meeting of the frogs was called. The complaints grew louder and louder, until finally all the frogs were convinced of the justice of the same, and thereupon the weeping and wailing became universal. A wise old frog now took the floor and said: 'Wherefore wail and complain? Let us try to think of some remedy whereby we may remove the evil.' The frogs became silent and hearkened. The wise frog continued: 'Let us devise ways and means to bring our plaint before the throne of the God of justice, and ask him for relief.' 'But how can we reach the throne of the God of justice that is so high and far away?' asked an humble little frog. 'We can not leap high into the air; for we are only frogs.' This called forth renewed wailing and weeping. The wise old frog arose once again and ordered the assembly to keep quiet. The frogs obeyed, and he spoke: 'At night, after the scorching sun has sunk behind the mountains and the peaceful evening refreshes all creatures with its cooling breezes, all hearts beat kindly and glow with love. At such a time truly the all-just God will be merciful also to us frogs, his creation. Let us be united, and we can accomplish anything. Let us unanimously and unitedly croak loudly and continuously after sunset in this fashion: "All-just God, we pray thee to let the earth stand still for six hours after revolving for eighteen hours, in order that thy harassed and troubled frogs may enjoy rest, quiet, and sleep."' The glorious suggestion was greeted with jubilant shouts. All frogdom took an oath of fealty and

jumped about comically. The frogs scattered in all directions, and kept their oath faithfully. As often as after a hot summer day the evening, with its soft breezes and its balmy zephyrs, descended upon earth and breathed love and mildness into all hearts, the host of frogs came forth from the swamps and croaked and croaked loudly and clearly: 'O thou all-just Creator of all, let the earth stand still for six hours in order that thy frogs may sleep undisturbed!' The frogs croak continually, the frogs croak still, and the earth—well, it moves none the less." It is true that I emphasized the closing words; the glasses clashed, but louder still was the salvo of applause. This grew until some one cried out, "Hurrah, hurrah, the frogs are worsted!" With this the shouts began anew. I recognized my opportunity. I said that this was not the place to expound principles; what was needed was money for the poor. I then spoke on charity. My words moved the assembly, and the result was all that could be desired. More money was collected than on any previous similar occasion, and I had learned to know my people.

The following Wednesday evening was a gala occasion for the *B'ne Yeshurun* Congregation. The anniversary of the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute was celebrated with pomp. Covers were laid for about three hundred people in the Allemania Hall. The ladies and gentlemen, the teachers and the invited guests, assembled in the reception-room. At eight o'clock all took their seats at table. There was an abundance of everything. Beauty graced the board, and a joyous spirit pervaded the gathering. Speech-

making followed the banqueting. The speeches were good and sensible. The toast assigned to me was, "Israel, the prince of God, the banner-bearer of eternal truth and eternal progress." I was in good trim. I was enthusiastically received, and spoke as though I were at home. I said briefly all that I had to say about reform and progress in Judaism. I did not omit a single important point, and supported my statements by historical precedents.

The storm of applause which followed my speech tended less to convince me of the impression which I had made (for I was used to applause) than did the two following points: First, after my speech, voluntary subscriptions were collected for the support of the school. Twice as much was collected as on any similar occasion. The officers of the school were highly elated. Secondly, the next toast was, "Our Guest," etc. Mr. Nathan Bloom, of Louisville, was asked to speak for the invited guests. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Bloom said that now all things were topsy-turvy in the heavens. Formerly the stars moved from west to east; but now the star of the east moved westward. This sentiment called forth vigorous applause, so that I could no longer doubt that the assembly was satisfied with me, although I had spoken quite unreservedly.

After these two festivals I felt completely at home. I permitted myself to be feasted, banqueted, lionized, introduced; in short, I took everything good-naturedly, and made friends with everybody. I preached in German for the first time in Cincinnati on the following Saturday. I set forth clearly, emphatically,

and fully what I thought of the future of Judaism in America, why and wherefore reforms seemed to me to be necessary, and how the same were to be introduced. I had finished, and thought of going home the following week. But this did not agree with the wishes of the powers that were in Cincinnati. In the afternoon two committees visited me: one from Bethel Lodge, No. 4, I. O. B. B., who requested me to deliver a public address on Sunday evening in the lodge-rooms. My friend, Marcus Fechheimer, winked significantly, and I accepted the invitation. "You will find quite a different class of people there, whom you did not meet at the banquets," said Fechheimer. "Their good-will and friendship will be of use to us, although I must say that thus far the intellectual element of Cincinnati has not affiliated itself in large numbers with the *B'ne Brith* Lodge."

Thereupon a very imposing committee of the old and respected congregation, *B'ne Israel*, the grandmother of all the Jewish congregations in the West, appeared. The congregation was at that time strictly orthodox, English, and very aristocratic, although quite a large German and liberal element was beginning to make its influence felt. I was invited to preach on the following Sabbath in the synagogue of the *B'ne Israel* congregation. Naturally I had to accept this honor, and therefore had to remain a week longer.

The room of the Bethel Lodge was crowded on Sunday evening. I idealized the *B'ne Brith* Order. Some of the saints who were in attendance were

teased and laughed at; but the holiest of them all declared that, although he would not go into the synagogue to listen to me, still he came to hear me here because he wanted to satisfy his curiosity, and to see what the golden calf about which all Israel was dancing looked like. This man became an intimate friend of mine later on.

During the week invitations galore to dinners and feasts flowed in. The week was a veritable round of pleasures. Among other entertainments there was one arranged by the *B'ne Brith* at the residence of Mr. William Renau. On that occasion Mr. Isaac Marks, alias "Ice Marks," made a remarkable speech. He came in late, and heard only a few of the compliments which were showered upon me. He was called upon to say something, and offered the following toast, "Love me little, love me long; open a dozen bottles of wine at my expense, and bring plenty of ice." His words were greeted with shouts of laughter; but he knew well why he spoke as he did. More than one individual had been praised and glorified and raised to the skies in Cincinnati, only to be neglected later on. I understood the man very well, and have remembered his laconic remarks.

I preached in the large *B'ne Israel* synagogue in Cincinnati before a very large congregation on the last Sabbath of the year 1853 on the teleology of Genesis. I laid down the proposition that the chief purpose of the author of the Book of Genesis was the development of the moral idea as the introduction to the account of the revelation. Since he wrote family history, and not family romance, he neces-

sarily had to portray all the faults of his characters; for there has never been, in fact, there can not be, a sinless human being. Therefore, although the Book of Genesis contains some immoral episodes, nevertheless, culminating in the story of Joseph, it portrays the whole development of morality, which has become the feature of the doctrine of revelation, and thus proves the teleology of morality despite all the faults and weaknesses of the actors. I had no reason for concealing or excusing the faults of the patriarchs and their wives, and was in the position to declare that Moses, the embodiment of national morality, was the logical successor of Joseph, the embodiment of individual morality. The object of my sermon was to establish the following conclusion: Reason is the final court of appeal in matters of morals; for this was at that time a burning question in the theological world. The sermon was well received, and praised even by the orthodox, for the simple reason that the far-reaching consequences of the statement were not understood. If reason possesses a higher authority than *that which is written*, religion and morality would have to be established on other foundations. The orthodox party seemed to have overlooked this altogether at that time.

The *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation assembled in their synagogue on the afternoon of that same day, and I bade them farewell. I introduced my address by saying how pleased I was with Cincinnati, and by thanking them for the friendly and cordial treatment I had received. The body of the address was

devoted to telling the congregation that I had given free and full expression to my opinions, which must now be clearly known to them all, and that progress, and not retrogression, must be the watchword of the future. I added that I never force my opinions upon the congregation, that I never command nor sulk, that I never interfere with the management of congregational affairs, but devote all my energies to teaching the people and to attempting to convince them of the truth of that which I consider good, true, and useful; that I never recede from this, nor permit myself to be disconcerted by friend or foe. I bade the congregation notify me before the coming spring in case they should not be satisfied with me, and I would remain in Albany; nor would I feel insulted, hurt, nor humiliated. We would remain good friends; for I could not expect everybody to share my convictions.

I left for Albany on Monday morning, and arrived there on Tuesday evening. I had to tell my wife all the particulars of my stay in Cincinnati. I received the official resolutions from Cincinnati several days later. They teemed with words of praise and satisfaction, and closed with the assurance that they looked forward to my coming with joyous anticipation. The die was cast, and I began to make preparations to leave Albany in the spring. I succeeded in canceling all but a few hundred dollars of my indebtedness during the winter by the sale of my book. I owed this money to my intimate friends, who did not press me for it. I was ready to remove to Cincinnati with my family by Passover, 1854.

I delivered my farewell address at the temple on the last day of Passover. I will not attempt to describe the scene. It was a day of mourning. I was attached to Albany with all the fibers of my heart. It was my first home in the New World. I had so many true and tried friends in the old city on the Hudson. Every child, every tree, was dear to me; but my school-days were over; I had to go out into the world. I had attended two schools in Albany for nearly eight years: the school of experience, of bitter struggles and brilliant triumphs, and the school of learning, whose lessons I had learned with tireless industry. I had no fortune, but yet I was very rich; for I had many warm friends, a wife and four children, much self-reliance, and a firm faith in God and the truth. A dreaming optimist and idealist, such as I always was, requires no more than this to be happy. He who lives for love requires no gold. What need has he of precious stones for whom truth and progress are the highest good? The materialist can not comprehend, nor can the cold-blooded realist understand this; and yet there is but one source of bliss on earth; namely, the self-contentment of a loving, investigating, striving spirit, which is always dwelling on the heights of idealism and optimism.

Upon my return home from the service I found my wife in tears, and I wept with her. These were the tears of farewell that I shed for my Albany. Thereupon I preached a very sentimental and edifying sermon to my wife. Fifteen minutes later I was my old self, cheerful, happy, and free. The fare-

well meal, the farewell toasts, the farewell gifts, the farewell speeches, and the farewell tears followed each other in rapid succession. I endured all these things well and courageously. The scholars, literati, camp-followers, bluestockings, and literary hangers-on of the library presented me with a large parchment roll, which contained the words: "Farewell. May God protect you! Our love goes with you." This sentiment was signed by one hundred and thirty-four names. I felt now indeed that my school-days were over for good.

I left quietly and secretly the next morning, April 20th, journeyed to Syracuse, and thence to Rochester. My brother-in-law, Edward Bloch, had promised to follow two days later with my family, and we were to meet in Rochester. I devoted the two days to my own purposes. I had already asked my friends in New York and Albany whether they would subscribe for a Jewish weekly which I intended to establish, and had received encouraging replies. About two hundred had subscribed, and many, among others Bernheimer Bros., promised to advertise in its columns. I made similar efforts in Syracuse and Rochester, and succeeded beyond all expectations.

I saw Simon Tuska and his father for the first time during these days. Neither is now in the land of the living. Simon Tuska had conducted a correspondence with me, and had become very dear to me. He was but a youth at that time, and was pursuing a course of studies at the Rochester University with the purpose of preparing himself for the

ministry. He was very eager to enter the rabbinical profession, which was exceedingly discredited in those days, and displayed more enthusiasm than I cared to see; for I feared, as I told him, that he would become as unthinking an enthusiast as I was, particularly as he had taken me as his model. Tuska made my stay in Rochester very pleasant. I made the acquaintance of the most prominent Jews and of the professors, and formed friendships which are still strong.

I met my dear ones at the station on the 24th. They were all well and cheerful, and we journeyed together westward. My wife was charmed with the changing scenes through which we passed. I also was in a happy frame of mind, notably when we rolled through the rich and blooming State of Ohio on the 25th. All the peach, plum, and cherry trees were in full blossom, displaying their pageantry of rich colors in the mild spring sunshine. The fields were full of life and bustle, dotted everywhere with flocks of sheep and playful lambs. It was a charming picture. My children shouted with glee. My wife was most happy, and chatted on a hundred subjects; but, for all that, I could not dispel the melancholy feelings that possessed me. "The school-days are over. I am entering upon life a second time. A new chapter of my biography is opening. What lies hidden in the lap of the future?" I grew frightened. It seemed to me as though black and storm-fraught clouds were ascending on the horizon, and I seemed to hear the distant thunder roll.

At noon I sat down in a corner of the station at Columbus, and wrote as follows: "I am troubled with anxious forebodings, now that I approach my new home, which I will reach in a few hours. I can not pierce the veil of the future. God wills that I should not. Wherefore this fear? Is it the echo of the past, or a magical voice from the future? O Lord God, thou alone knowest." Many of my readers may recognize that the thoughts and feelings entertained by me at this time appear in the introduction to the memorial service, but they do not know that the principal passages of that service were written on the train between Columbus and Cincinnati in April, 1854.

We reached the Queen City of the West safely at night, and found temporary quarters, where we were hospitably received. The president, Marcus Fechheimer, introduced me to the Board of Trustees at a meeting convened for this purpose on April 26, 1854. Mr. Solomon Friedmann, president of the school, introduced me to the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute as superintendent, so that I was installed *de facto* into office and position.

PART II

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I

UPON assuming office in the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation and the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute at the end of April, 1854, I found myself not one whit different from what I had been eight years before. I was the same incorrigible idealist and optimist, enthusiast and world-improver, full of great world-revolutionizing and world-redeeming plans, without any executive ability, and without sufficient insight or discretion. In my imagination I accomplished everything quickly, surely, and finely. Because I was able to write and speak in two languages, and because I had been called to Cincinnati on the strength of my literary reputation, I persuaded myself that I would be able to accomplish any and every thing, and that all that was necessary was to nod my head *a la* Zeus. There were two things particularly that had become fixed ideas in my mind; viz., that I had talent for all things, and that I was a child of destiny. Naturally, when I acted upon my theories, I had ample opportunities to discover that I had often reckoned without my host.

Although I was very fiery, thoughtless, and rash, as a general thing, yet I was very moderate, considerate, and argumentative (as far as externalities were concerned) in the pulpit, and chiefly for the following reasons: I was the only Jewish preacher in Cin-

cinnati, or, rather, in the entire West. Therefore I had to address every Saturday a very large but very mixed audience. My hearers comprised, not only members of the three other congregations of Cincinnati, but also the inhabitants of near and distant towns, because business brought many merchants of the West and South to Cincinnati at that time. I was therefore compelled to speak tactfully and carefully if I wished to succeed, and I was determined to succeed. I was fortunate in finding a splendid element in the congregation—men who, without any great exertion on my part, desired, favored, and actively supported every forward and progressive movement. I met with no obstacles in the congregation itself; everything was peaceful and harmonious. The congregation consisted for the most part of natives of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Baden, who had been favorable to reform even before they had left their old homes. As early as the second Sabbath of my incumbency, the president, Marcus Fechheimer, without calling a meeting for the purpose, made the following announcement in the synagogue: Since English and German sermons are preached alternately during the morning service, the *piutim* have become superfluous; they are therefore abolished till further notice. This settled the fate of the *piutim:* they were never again made the subject of discussion. Soon thereafter the sale of the *mitzvoth* was abolished. I recognized that all things would turn out right if I would be content to make haste slowly.

The introduction of a choir was not accomplished so readily. Upon my approaching the *parnass* on

this subject, he was free to confess that he did not consider it feasible, because a number of attempts had already been made in vain, and the congregation had spent several hundred dollars without being able to establish a choir. I was assured, however, that the necessary funds for the purpose would be forthcoming if I would pledge myself to bring the project to a successful issue. Thereupon I went to work actively. I called together a number of young people, among others, A. J. Friedlander, Frederick Eichberg, L. Loeb, David Wise, Ludwig Brandeis, Gideon, and others, who organized a society, induced a number of young girls to join them, engaged Junkerman at once as singing-teacher, and Cincinnati began to sing. The voices were quite good; the young people were exceedingly enthusiastic; the *chazan*, Marx Moses, had not only a good voice, but was possessed of the necessary musical training, so that it required but a few weeks for the young people to study the evening service composed by Sulzer. The choir now appeared in the synagogue without further ado.

That was a great Friday evening for Cincinnati. Members of all the congregations flocked to the synagogue, and filled it. The harmonious strains of Sulzer's music resounded for the first time in a synagogue in the western part of America, to glorify the dawn of a new era. The venture proved completely successful. Cincinnati listened, and all hearts glowed with enthusiasm. "That is what we wish," was said on all sides. Marcus Fechheimer celebrated a veritable triumph, and the members of the choir were transported by their great feats. They contin-

ued to study, and before the autumn had denuded the trees of their leaves, they had learned and introduced the morning service.

It is scarcely conceivable now what a victory for culture and progress the introduction of a synagogal choir was at that time. No reform of the Jewish service was possible until the Jewish ear had again become accustomed to harmony and beauty. The service would have disappeared gradually altogether if it had not been reinstated in its old dignity and uplifting solemnity by song. Many who longed unconsciously for, or who even opposed the introduction of the choir into the synagogue, surely recognize now how the harmonious strains affect and edify the worshiper, and exert an uplifting effect even upon the whole of life. The first choral songs in the *B'ne Yeshurun* synagogue in Cincinnati were a new pathfinder of culture for the Israelites of the West.

Although the external reforms were introduced slowly, I was much less timorous in regard to enlightenment in the school and in the pulpit. I took the instruction of the young in charge, and carried out my own ideas and convictions on the subject. The enlightenment of the people has always seemed to me the most important reform. Of all things, the prime essential has ever appeared to me to awaken the spirit, to force it to activity, and to give it fresh and healthy nourishment. I thought that the external forms would fit themselves of their own accord to the newly-awakened spirit. I preached, therefore, in the same rationalistic style that I had employed in writing history. I never failed to prove

whatever theories I advanced. To my thinking, proof was of prime importance. I did not wish either my word or my faith to decide. Therefore my opponents called me the "jurist of the pulpit." I pursued the same course in my school. Before long I had made rationalists of all connected with the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute—teachers, pupils, and officers.

I set forth my principles freely and unreservedly in my inaugural sermon on the first Sabbath. The large mixed audience seemed to be thoroughly satisfied. There was only one who refused to agree with me. This was Mrs. F. When, according to my usual custom, I scrutinized my audience carefully, before beginning to preach, I noticed Mrs. F. in the gallery. As a sign of her deep interest and attentiveness, she put her eye-glasses in place, through which, as I knew well, she was able to see far and clearly. I received her card in the afternoon; but it was not possible for me to call on her till the following Monday. She had not written to me since the day I had returned the money to her; but upon my entering the parlors of the hotel, she received me in as cordial a manner as ever, and told me she was on her way from New Orleans to Philadelphia, where she expected to spend the summer, and that she had determined to take advantage of the opportunity to reclaim her faithless Hamlet. I was quite prepared for a scene, but she scarcely let me catch my breath; then she introduced her two daughters to me. "My daughter, Louise," said she, "has studied German in France, and writes poems, which she sets to music. She has

written one poem that pleases me particularly. She must sing it for us." Louise stepped to the piano and sang a beautiful song in a soulful voice, which still vibrates softly and touchingly within me.

I did not kiss the dear and sweet child, who was buried two years later in Newport, but I wept bitterly upon receiving the mournful intelligence.

Two more songs followed, and then Mrs. F. began her sermon. First of all she reproached me: "You returned a gift, or, rather, a voluntary loan, to a true friend. This hurt my feelings very much." I explained the reasons for my action, and she was satisfied. She now proceeded to the matter in hand: "If you continue in the same manner as you wrote and spoke in Albany, and as you spoke last Saturday, you will make so many enemies in this uncultured West that your life will become most unpleasant. You are too violent and much too outspoken. Either you do not know the world, or you do not object to becoming a martyr. I adjure you by the sacred and disinterested friendship I feel for you to proceed wisely and discreetly."

The woman spoke so earnestly, solemnly, and feelingly that I became frightened. I knew that this Mrs. F. was possessed of a keen insight and a deep knowledge of human nature, and also knew that she was sincerely interested in me and at the same time devoted to the cause of Judaism and progress. It was only after a long conversation that I grew clear as to my course. Before my departure I said to her: "Be not uneasy, madam. I can not change my disposition, nor be false to my convictions. I must leave

the issue with the Almighty. I intend to begin the publication of a weekly as soon as possible, and I will start a conflagration here in the West which the whole orthodox host will not be able to quench. Believe me, I am equal to all the enemies I have now or will make in the future. I will not be the slave of the masses, but will uplift them. If this is impossible, I will retire from the field and do something else."

"'T is well, my dear Samson," said she. "If you thus bring down the pillars of the temple of Dagon, have a care for your beautifully-formed head with its lion's mane. But note one point more, I beg of you. The fighter may be feared, admired, yea, even worshiped; but he can never be beloved. He is too terrible. Just now you are beloved like all geniuses. This love you will lose. If you conquer, you will be admired and revered, but not beloved; if you fail, hatred and contempt will be your portion."

"Then I must conquer, come what will," I cried, as I shook her hand in a good-bye clasp. I went home immediately, and wrote the weighty words in my diary with red ink. This woman's expressions have persecuted, worried, and plagued me, and yet, as I have had frequent occasion to learn, Mrs. F. spoke the truth.

Immediately upon my arrival in Cincinnati, several members of the two *B'ne B'rith* Lodges joined me in the effort of obtaining a charter for a third lodge, which we called Mt. Carmel, No. 20. This was the twentieth in the country, so that the Order did not number over two thousand, all told. Since I had

already passed through all the offices, I was elected vice-president at once. We succeeded in making the membership representative, although it had the reputation of being aristocratic. The most prominent citizens of the city were members of the new lodge. Since a better element was affiliated with and guided the helm of the Order in the West than in the East, I took an active interest in it also, and contributed my mite towards its advancement. My neighbors and friends, B. and M. Simon, persuaded me to join the Odd Fellows; for a new lodge, the Northwestern, was forming just then. I joined this lodge, but I did not take any especially active part in the doings of the Order. Another friend, M. J. Mack, was instrumental in having me join the Masons (Hanselman Lodge). I began to build and do "Mason's" work. Later I joined the Druids, Harugari, and I know not what other orders; so that finally I was initiated into so many secrets that my head fairly whirled with them all. The fact is that I learned nothing whatsoever from all these secrets; for there is nothing to them. That which Josephus Flavius once remarked to Apion, "The children in the streets of Jerusalem use as playthings those things which your priests impart so secretly in your mysteries to the initiated," may be aptly said of the secrets of all the secret orders. They do not amount to anything. Dull mechanism, symbolic trifling, and stiff routine—these are the chief features. The doctrines and the instructions are very good and sensible, but as a general thing, they are neither understood nor practiced. Two reasons, however, induced me to con-

tinue my allegiance to the lodges; viz., their charity and the cosmo-political principle upon which they were based. Other things kept alive my interest in the *B'ne B'rith*. Of these I will speak later, although I can think of no single public act of injustice of which I have been the victim that was not inspired by *B'ne B'rith* brethren and leaders. At the same time I was made an honorary member of the Allemania and other societies, so that full provision was made for social diversions. Upon my being elected president of the Cincinnati Benevolent Society, I was convinced that time would not drag heavily on my hands. Besides all this, some one was so malicious as to declare that I was a very benevolent person, was very liberal and ready to help at all times. The result of this was that I was sought out by all the poor, and was besieged from morning till late at night.

As early as the month of May I began to take steps towards establishing a Jewish weekly. I wrote very many letters and received very glowing promises, which, however, were never kept. Contributions of all kinds were promised, but they were never received; yet I went confidently to work and wrote matter which I intended to make use of later. Fortunately I wrote very readily, and possessed rare facility in the use of the English language; hence I could commit to writing very quickly thoughts which may have occupied my mind many days. Writing itself was mere play after I had thought out a theme.

At the end of May I began to look for some merciful individual who would be so amiable as to

publish a Jewish weekly under my direction; but such a one was not to be found, and I began to admire the good, sound sense of all the disciples of Faust and Gutenberg. There was no one among the Jews who had any idea of printing or publishing; therefore I could not expect any one of them to undertake this very risky venture. Christian publishers declared bluntly that a few Jews could not insure the success of any paper. I did not relish the thought of borrowing money so soon after my arrival in Cincinnati, particularly as my debt in Albany was not yet liquidated. I did not know what to do. Finally I came across a visionary, Dr. Schmidt, the owner of the German evening paper, the *Republican*, and of quite a large printing establishment on Third Street, in the very heart of the business district of Cincinnati. Dr. Schmidt accepted my promise that I would make good all losses at the end of the first year. Steps were now taken to have the *Israelite* appear at the beginning of July. Having given orders that I did not wish to be disturbed, I locked myself in my room from two o'clock in the afternoon till four in the morning, and wrote a prospectus. What should I say to the public, what suppress? was a leading question. I stood before the burning thornbush and struggled with myself. Conviction, conscience, duty, were ranged against policy. I had to decide one way or the other. If I used my talents and my position in a politic way, I would soon become rich, and nothing could prevent me from entering upon and pursuing successfully a brilliant career. But if I remained true to

my convictions, the bent of my nature, then I must be ready to renounce wealth, honors, recognition, and love; I must be ready to serve the cause for the love of the truth. Mrs. F. arose before me like a ghost, and I read once again her words, which I had written in my diary with red ink:

"The fighter may be feared, admired, yea, even worshiped; but he can never be beloved. He is too terrible. Just now you are beloved like all geniuses. This love you will lose. If you conquer, you will be admired and revered, but not beloved. If you fail, hatred and contempt will be your portion."

I struggled very hard that night, until I reached the following decision: "Come what may and how it may, I will not swerve a hair's-breadth from my convictions. Either I will build up a Judaism suited to the age and breathing the atmosphere of American freedom, or I will be buried beneath the ruins of the old Judaism. I do not wish to be rich nor honored, nor recognized, nor beloved. I will do my duty. I will remain true to my convictions."

Then I wrote the prospectus—short, concise, clear, and fearless. I promised Judaism a sharp weapon. I promised progress, enlightenment, spiritual striving, a fearless organ. The prospectus was printed, distributed, and mailed by the following afternoon.

I have often thought how little conception the general reader has of the emotions which sway a poet or author while engaged in literary composition; how little they imagine that sometimes every line has surged forth from an overcharged heart, and

every word is a crystallized tear. These poor litterateurs, victims of careless humanity, pour out their heart's blood on the altar of historical progress, in order to furnish this one matter for entertainment and pastime, and that one for execration and persecution. If all goes well, the hungry poet is fed, though his heart be breaking the while. I have often been surprised that they do not all write bitterly, like Heine. Only that which is deeply felt can produce a deep effect, and that which is deeply felt is fed by the heart's blood. I have often experienced this, but why it is so, I know not.

The prospectus was well received in Cincinnati for the most part. Naturally, only a few friends were enthusiastic. The replies from the country were few, and still fewer from other cities. The indifference was greater than the objection to reform. Shortly thereafter I visited, with Dr. Rosenfeld, a friend in M., where about ten Jewish families lived, to whom I gave the prospectus. Seven of them declared they could not read English; one said that a Jewish paper was a useless commodity, and two subscribed. Several days later I visited Louisville for the first time. I found there a well-organized congregation with a beautiful synagogue. Mr. Gotthelf was preacher and *chazan*. I delivered two public addresses there. I was admired by the public, and made a number of very warm friends. My prospectus was received coldly, except by the few friends of reformed tendencies, who were very enthusiastic. At the end of June we had about five hundred subscrib-

ers for the *Israelite*, and began to print and mail one thousand copies. The first number appeared on the 6th of July. It contained the beginning of a novel, "The Convert," a poem, news, leading articles, my Fourth-of-July oration, an opening article on the institutions of Cincinnati, and miscellanea. As a matter of course, every one in Cincinnati had to see the paper, whose motto was יהי אור, and which was to voyage through the world bearing the name of Israel.

I knew full well that every beginning is difficult; but I had no idea that the establishment of a Jewish weekly would prove as difficult as it did. Three things particularly were wanting; viz., confidence in the editor; secondly, writers; thirdly, readers. Ever since I had undertaken the editorship of the *Asmonean*, Isaac Leeser had treated me as a public opponent, and we had many a sharp encounter, although we had never belabored each other with polemical diatribes *a la* Boerne, such as were later imported from Germany. Upon the appearance of the *Israelite*, with its outspoken reform tendency, Leeser wrote in the *Occident:* "A weekly paper has begun to appear in Cincinnati under the direction of the well-known Mr. Wise, falsely called *Israelite*. It will in all likelihood prove a creature of a day, and will soon go the way of all flesh." The *Asmonean* did not dare be as unfriendly as this, since it was edited by Dr. Lilienthal, but it looked upon the new paper with distrust, and accorded it as cool a reception as was possible. The political press took scarcely

any notice of the "little Jewish paper," as some called it. Abroad the paper was unknown, and no one even mentioned it, except the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, which noticed it in its news columns. All this neither angered nor surprised me; for I have never cared whether I was mentioned, praised, or blamed; besides, I knew very well that my paper would have to be simple and popular; for I wanted to write for the people—*i. e.*, for my people. This would not give scholars any reason for particular admiration. I was convinced that I could not count on the support of the press.

A number of friends had promised me original contributions and translations; but when the campaign was ready to be opened, I found myself without an army. My sorriest embarrassment lay in the fact that I had announced Jewish novels in the prospectus, and could not obtain any. I wished to reawaken the slumbering patriotism by Jewish stories and thus overcome the indifference. I had an object, therefore, in desiring novels; but despite all promises I had none. I had no choice but to write novels in the sweat of my brow. During the first year I wrote two: "The Convert" and "The Shoemaker's Family," the latter with a historical background. These assisted the paper greatly. How did I write novels? I wrote the required chapter every week, but no sooner than I had to. The first pages were set up while the last were being written. On one occasion I was in a sorry plight: I had made two maidens fall in love with one and the same character,

and I had to get rid of one of them. I was in sore straits. How was I to get rid of a lovelorn female? I had no experience in such things, and yet I wanted to dispose of her decently, romantically, and effectively. I therefore had the poor thing become insane; and the unhappy creature had to jump from a window during the conflagration of the ghetto of Frankfort and thus meet her death. The poor creature was greatly mourned and wept for the following Saturday, and all the tears fell upon my burdened conscience. The most serious feature of the whole matter was that my wife made sport of me every Thursday evening, and declared stoutly that I had forgotten entirely how to enact a lover's part.

A still greater difficulty lay in procuring readers. It was very hard to obtain such. No one was used to reading a Jewish paper. My personal friends read the paper and sought to circulate it; but their number was, sad to say, very small. I received frequently communications of the following import from the country: "We are not Jews. We do not need a Jewish paper. We do not wish to be known as Jews. There is no honor in being a Jew. I have nothing to do with Jews." Or else: "I do not intend to have myself *shmad* as yet; I do not want any *T'refah posul* in my house," etc. The fact is, that very few could read English, and the fewest of these wanted to be known as Jews. Frivolity and indifference were the order of the day, and in the cities atheism and hatred of all religion were rampant among the Germans. This was the case in Cincinnati,

particularly under the ægis of the Freeman's Hall. It did not profit me to have attacked, scourged, and finally routed atheism with all the weapons at my command; for it took time to accomplish this. The mass was large and unapproachable, and my arguments were slow in convincing a foolish, misguided, and semi-cultured class of people who repeat, parrot-like, whatever happens to be the fad of the hour.

But this was not the worst feature of the situation. A company of baptized Jews, armed with McAll's writings, had been sent to this country by the London Society for the Conversion of the Jews. McAll had rehashed Eisenmenger; hence the Talmud and, incidentally, the Jews and Judaism were attacked. It came to pass erelong that every pastor and every insignificant little preacher, every common jester, and every political rogue rained blows upon the Talmud and the Jews. A rascally Jew figured in every cheap novel, every newspaper printed some stale jokes about the Jews to fill up space, every backwoodsman had a few such jokes on hand for use in public addresses; and all this called forth not one word of protest from any source. A company of English missionaries plied the conversion business in New York systematically with the aid of their own magazine; and there was no one in the great city of New York who objected to their proceedings. I can not deny that these things disgusted me; but for this very reason I proceeded against them maliciously, wrote articles filled with fire and brimstone instead of with becoming and polite words, forgetting for the

time that I was a clergyman. I did not mind the abuse to which I was subjected, and cared not though the rabble cried, Hep! Hep! I struck right and left so violently that the sparks flew in all directions. I belabored unmercifully every one who spoke against the Jews, Judaism, and the Talmud, and used both fists on the principle, "Two kicks for one blow;" in short, I became a malicious, biting, pugnacious, challenging, and mocking monster of the pen. Mrs. F. scolded me in every letter, and begged me for God's sake to be a gentleman; but I would not listen to her, and continued to fight like a wild boar that had been fired at. These tactics proved efficacious, but, as a matter of course, only after a time. In the first place, I succeeded in silencing the opposition, and routed the New York company, together with their magazine. In the second place, the *Israelite* became known and recognized as the organ of all Jewry, and not alone of the reform party. Thirdly, the cowards threw off their disguise, and were no longer ashamed to be Jews. Fourthly, the much-decried Wise became all at once a mighty personage, so that the *Israelite* continued to exist and to prosper despite all obstacles and all opponents.

The fiercely-burning flame which was kindled and burned within me made me also a fiery, unbridled, and reckless, but at the same time a very effective, speaker. This made me very popular, not only in Cincinnati, but throughout the West; and the cause of reform came to be considered especially connected

with my personality. "Greatly as we disapprove of Wise and his methods," my opponents were wont to say, "we readily grant him one great virtue: he is always ready to stand in the breach for the Jews and Judaism. On such occasions he is a veritable thunderbolt." Whenever I heard expressions like this, I said to myself: "If the time ever comes that my lightning strikes, no one will succeed in wresting the victory from me."

"TEMPLE ISRAEL"

II

IT did not take me long to become master of the situation in Cincinnati. The sacro-sanct orthodox party that had waged continual warfare for years with slaughterers, butchers, women's bath-house keepers, *Matzoth* bakers, *Ethragim* dealers, and *Minhagim* peddlers, and had deceived Cincinnati and themselves, disappeared like chaff, and no one knew what had become of all the gigantic minds and *lamdanim*. The old *Beth Din* had been dissolved by a single pronunciamento uttered from the pulpit, and I assumed all rabbinical functions. I concluded a treaty of peace with all harassed souls, and within a few weeks every slaughterer and butcher was singing my praises, especially since Mr. Hyman Moses and Dr. Mayer (now of Hartford) were known and recognized at once as my adjutant-generals.

At times laughable incidents took place. A woman came to me and requested that I "learn *shiur*" for her deceased father, for whom she would soon have *Yahrzeit*. Upon my telling her that I had no need of money, and that my "learning" could be of no use to her father, the good woman was greatly astonished at the infidelity of her rabbi. On the following Sabbath I denounced the Jewish substitute for the Catholic mass; the "*shiur* learners" wailed and lamented that their means of earning a livelihood was

thus taken from them, but their occupation was gone. Another woman came to me with a harrowing tale to the effect that there were ghosts in her house, and she feared the cause of it was *possle m'zuzoth*. I went to her home, took the *m'zuzoth* down, showed the terrified woman that they were not *posul*, and found the cause of the disturbance. Rat-poison soon drove the evil spirits out of the house. The tricks of magic performed by Reb Seckel Loeb Michelstadt * had aroused the wondering admiration of many, and I lost no opportunity to ridicule them to my heart's content. In connection with this, it must be remembered that I was quite as well able as my opponents to answer questions submitted to me, and to give Talmudical references. As a result, I acquired the reputation of being a great rabbinical scholar, although I never stood in the odor of sanctity. The more my opponents used their learning to keep the people in ignorance, the more I pursued the opposite course. I attempted to enlighten the people. As a result all the old men became my supporters. The deceased fathers Loeb, Stix, Mack, Levi, and many other old men who are still among the living, accepted my dicta and decisions as the word of the master, by which they would have sworn as had been the custom in days long past.

The result of all this was not long in appearing. The *B'ne Yeshurun* synagogue was crowded every Saturday, and the large and costly *B'ne Israel* synagogue became the gathering-place of the English-Polish-German orthodox, who exerted themselves to

*A so-called *Baal Shem*, or wonder rabbi, of great renown.—[ED.

the utmost to perpetuate all the old indecorum in the service. The *bona fide* members of the congregation became convinced that a change must take place, or else the congregation would soon dissolve.

Mr. Philip Heidelbach, president of the *B'ne Israel* congregation, having been assured of the support of the most influential members, took decisive steps in the matter. A general meeting of the congregation was called, and the following resolutions were adopted by a vote of ninety-three to twelve:

"That the rabbi of the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation is hereby elected for life rabbi of the *B'ne Israel* congregation, with the understanding that he is to preach alternately in both synagogues, and to discharge all rabbinical functions in both congregations.

"That the *B'ne Israel* congregation proceed at once to build a school, and the said rabbi is elected superintendent of this school.

"That the *B'ne Israel* congregation contribute as much as the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation towards the salary of the rabbi."

A committee of fifty came to my house at midnight to apprise me of the action of the congregation. Joy reigned unconfined. It was a fairly won battle, a victory for the cause of progress in Judaism, for the *B'ne Israel* congregation was looked upon as the mother congregation of Western Jewry, and as the camp of simon-pure orthodoxy.

I did not close my eyes that night. My wife sat up with me in my study, and regaled me with charming stories of our youthful days, her aim being to calm my excited feelings. I described the incident in

my diary the next morning, and wrote beneath the words: "The day is breaking,"

סוף הכבוד לבוא

As everywhere in America, so also were there differences, prejudices, and jealousies between the congregations in Cincinnati. These were caused mostly by the national prejudices brought from Europe. Englishmen, Poles, and Germans, and among the latter North and South Germans, Old and Rhine Bavarians, Hessians and Alsatians, etc., entertained no kindly feelings towards one another. They teased each other whenever opportunity offered. This led to malignity at times. Further, there were the individual interests and the pride of every congregation which found expression in raillery. An additional and special disagreement between the *B'ne Israel* and the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregations of Cincinnati was caused by the fact that the latter had been formed in opposition to the former by the Germans as against the predominant English element, and used the "*Minhag Ashkenaz*" instead of the "*Minhag Polen;*" therefore, harmonious and friendly co-operation between these two congregations was out of the question. True, I denounced these prejudices unsparingly, and ridiculed them; but it was long ere my efforts bore fruit. My *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation would not entertain the proposition that its rabbi should belong also to the *B'ne Israel* congregation.

I assumed temporarily all rabbinical functions in the *B'ne Israel* congregation before my congregation

could take official action in the matter. I preached there on Saturday afternoon, since I could not do so in the morning. We proceeded at once to open a school which I called *Noyoth*. It had four teachers. I filled both positions to the best of my ability, although the consent of the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation was not likely to be given, and I did not consider myself justified in taking violent measures. The officers of the *B'ne Israel* congregation and I were on the best of terms. We worked together harmoniously, and the orthodox element was beginning to accept the inevitable; but my *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation would not move from its position.

The orthodox party in the East was furious at the sudden change of public opinion in Cincinnati in favor of progress, and Isaac Leeser came West in the late autumn to save his *Occident*, and to change public opinion. Reports came from all quarters to the effect that Leeser was attacking me bitterly; but I paid no attention to this. I mused thus: "The man is right. He sees himself about to perish, and is doing all he can to save himself." Finally Leeser came to Cincinnati also. I was asked whether he should be invited to preach in the *B'ne Israel* synagogue. I had no objection. He used the occasion to thunder against reform and its apostles; but it was too late, the people had changed their convictions. The anniversary of the Relief Society took place on Sunday evening. Leeser's friends came to me, the president, and requested me to invite him to the banquet. I appointed three of their number as a committee to invite him to respond to the toast, "Our Guests." I repaired

to the banquet-hall at the appointed hour, to receive the invited guests. The committee introduced Leeser to me. I welcomed him cordially, and extended my hand in sign of greeting. He refused to take it. After all present had taken their seats at table, the privilege of "making *motzi*" was auctioned according to the ancient custom. The opposing parties bid against one another in a lively manner. My people succeeded in capturing the prize. They bought the "*mitzvah*" for an extravagant sum, and desired to confer the honor upon me. I declared that as I was virtually the host, it was quite impossible for any such special honor to be conferred on me. I therefore suggested that Mr. Isaac Leeser be given this distinction. The *Benshen* was sold in the same manner after the meal, and the honor was again offered me. As before, I designated Leeser to be the recipient thereof. Nothing, however, could mollify his wrath, and when he arose to respond to his toast he overwhelmed me with bitter reproaches and insults in the name of Judaism, which, as he claimed, I wished to undermine and destroy. The excitement was intense. In order to avoid a scene, I had to restrain my people, who were beside themselves with rage. After Leeser had finished, the people called out "Wise! Wise! Wise!" so thunderously, that I became frightened. "Quiet, gentlemen!" said I. "This evening and in this place I am the presiding officer. The regular order of exercises will not be interrupted. Mr. Vice-President, please announce the next toast." The Vice-President did as he was bidden. A rejoinder was therefore not to be looked

for from me on that evening. When they became conscious of this, Leeser and his friends hurried from the hall, and the excitement was over. The Prussian Consul Burkhardt, who was the next speaker, had all the diplomacy of a statesman. He indulged in biting witticisms on orthodox politeness, decency, and peacefulness, as well as on naughty reform stoicism. This restored the good humor of the assemblage. "War to the knife," Leeser had said. Burkhardt dwelt on this phrase particularly, because it had roused the people to fury. In this manner I triumphed in Cincinnati over Leeser and his English-Polish adherents, and was left in peace. On the following day, Taylor, the proprietor and editor of the *Times*, presented me with a gold pen in recognition of my Christian humility and pagan stoicism. Leeser brought charges against me to Mrs. F.; but he told her only the truth. She wrote me a love-letter.

In the meantime reforms were taking place quietly in the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation. Immediately after the institution of the choir as a permanent feature of the service, the desire for an organ was expressed. We began to consider ways and means as to how this could be satisfied without strife or contest. Mr. Jacob L. Miller was president of the congregation. He and the whole Board were unanimous. The only drawback lay in the circumstance that there was no room in the synagogue for an organ. Fortunately a large *Bimah* stood in the center of the building. The space to the east as far as the *Aron Haqqodesh* and to the west as far as the door was empty. Thus the middle of the synagogue was almost unoccupied, and up-

stairs in the western gallery there was a large room over the vestibule which was separated from the main building by a wall. "If we remove this wall we will gain about sixty seats for the women, and in a second gallery above this there will be ample room for an organ and the choir; further, if we remove the *Bimah*, and place the pulpit and the reading-desk near the *Aron Haqqodesh*, we will gain about sixty seats for the men in the center." This was our plan. The organ and the alterations in the building would cost from $10,000 to $12,000. The new seats which we would gain would bring in that sum. The Board resolved to lay this plan before a congregational meeting, which was called for Purim evening.

The undertaking met with some opposition on the part of such as objected to the expense, although they did not advance any objection on the score of principle. This objection could be met easily. On Purim morning I preached on the old custom of *Sh'loach Manoth*, and announced that I would come myself to receive my presents. Jacob L. Miller and I spent the morning from nine to twelve o'clock in visiting members of the congregation, with the purpose of having them advance the money, which was to be repaid within three years without interest. By twelve o'clock twelve thousand dollars had been subscribed, and we had not called on all. The wind was taken out of the opposition's sails when at the meeting in the evening the plan, the money to carry it out, and the project of selling sufficient seats to repay the loan were submitted. The suggestion of the Board was concurred in without further parley, and the alterations in the

synagogue were begun immediately after Passover. I had to resign my position in the *B'ne Israel* congregation.

I looked ill all the time. Having been invited to come to Cleveland to lecture, I took sick there, and had to remain in Kalisch's house several days. Upon my return I was compelled to remain at home a number of weeks. The report was circulated that I was consumptive. The truth of the matter was, that I could not stand the Western climate. My anxious friends declared, as usual, that I worked too hard. I must rest more, said they, as though I enjoyed this at any time. My wife believed all this, and let me know in as delicate a manner as possible that she did not wish to be left a widow. Finally Mr. Philip Heidelbach came to me, and informed me that their congregation could secure Dr. Lilienthal, and that it depended on me as to whether negotiations should begin. I resolved at once to hand in my resignation. A silver fruit-basket suitably inscribed, and a set of laudatory resolutions informed me of my honorable dismissal by the *B'ne Israel* congregation.* Thus I was rabbi of all Cincinnati for about one year. My word was law in the four congregations. The orthodox party was completely routed. One of them

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*The author of the "Reminiscences" plays upon the word "Korb," which in the German has, besides its usual meaning, "basket," also an idiomatic significance. This play upon the word can not be reproduced in English, and I therefore reproduce the original:

"*Der erste Korb den ich in meinem Leben bekommen habe, war ein silberner, der jetzt noch einen bedeutenden Werth fuer mich hat.*"—[ED.

cursed me publicly. He was a *ben b'rith*, and had been president of a lodge. He was not admitted to the Grand Lodge because of his expressions against me. After two years I learned of the circumstance. I pleaded for him, and as a result he was admitted to the Grand Lodge.

Another orthodox major domo was a *mohel*. I was invited to a *b'rith milah*, and after the meal the *mohel* began to say grace, but took no notice of me, inasmuch as he did not mention my rank and title in the *r'shuth*. I arose from the table immediately, and went into the next room. The whole company followed me. The good man had to *bensh* by himself, and besides had to apologize to me later.

I accustomed these worthies by-and-by to respect my rank and position. After that I always got along well with them. We even became intimate friends, and continue such to this day. I frequented the restaurants with the people, drank with them, attended the theater, the opera, and balls; but I never played cards with them. In spite of all this, I never permitted undue familiarity. I always knew how to maintain the dignity of my position, even when drinking with them. Thus I soon became the friend and acquaintance of every one, without growing too intimate with any one. I concealed my pride within me, and thus it served me best.

The *Israelite* became very popular in a short time; but it did not pay. The subscription-list was entirely too small. Since I had resolved firmly never to become rich, I used the popularity of the paper to further my projects. I had already begun in the

Asmonean to make propaganda for the establishment of an institute for higher Jewish learning, and I began agitating the same idea again. The subjects of the leaders in the *Israelite* were as follows: You must give your sons and your daughters a better education, you must found higher institutes of learning for this purpose, you must educate men for the pulpit and the professor's chair. At home I had to pay most attention to having the Sabbath observed, and had to devote my energies to inducing the larger business houses to observe the day; hence I could not always treat the subjects mentioned above; but in my leaders I laid chief stress upon the education of the young.

Everything that I proposed was well received in Cincinnati, and faithfully supported. It was resolved at a public meeting to organize the Zion Collegiate Association. Any one who pledged himself to pay ten dollars annually was admitted to membership. The plan was to organize similar associations in all the cities of the country, and then to have the united societies found and support a higher Jewish academy or college. The association was organized in Cincinnati at once, and three hundred members were enrolled. I was enthusiastically received in Louisville, and the same resolutions as had been passed at Cincinnati were indorsed at a large mass-meeting. The most prominent Jewish merchants gave glowing promises to do everything in their power to bring the college into being. Had I understood local conditions thoroughly at that time (1855), and had I visited the West and the South, organized the societies, and aroused the people as I did so successfully in

Cincinnati and Louisville, Zion College would have been founded within two or three years. I was, however, too impractical, had no executive ability, and by far too little experience. Unfortunately everything depended on my personal influence. Instead of doing this, I heeded the advice of my friends, and made a trip to the East.

As I have mentioned above, the people believed me to be consumptive, for I was again as weak physically as I had been in 1849. However, my spirit was stronger and my will more powerful. I did not permit myself to be discouraged, and entertained no fear of death. As the synagogue was being renovated, and the schools were in charge of excellent teachers, I permitted myself to be persuaded to take a trip to the East. In the beautiful month of May I embarked on a steamer in company with my wife and son Leo, in order to journey up the Ohio as far as Wheeling. The delicate attentions paid me by the female passengers convinced me that I must be sickly indeed in appearance. This annoyed me greatly. I resolved firmly not even to look sick. I trifled, joked, read Byron's poems to the attentive company, declaimed most elegantly and pathetically, drank the best wines, breathed the pure air, ate candies with the ladies, had them sing and play for me, until I looked perfectly well. The journey up the Ohio to Wheeling lasted three days and two nights. I arrived at this place in good health. My wife said so many sweet things that I could have filled a confectionery; the little boy jumped about like a playful kid; the negro servants in the hotel swarmed about us like satellites;

the host and the hostess overwhelmed us with attentions, so that the hotel appeared to me to be a kind of fool's paradise. I could not understand how it was that the host and the hostess, the negroes and all the other servants treated us so politely and cordially. But I was not left unenlightened very long. Towards evening a fine-looking man entered my room, and addressed me rather bluntly: "My name is Henry (Harry) Wise; they say you are my brother." "That is quite impossible," I answered. "I am a Bohemian Jew; perhaps my wife is your sister." The gentleman bowed politely and laughed, sat down, and we formed one another's acquaintance. We discussed the genealogy of all the Wises, Wyses, Weises, and Weisses, until we finally reached the conclusion that we possibly descended from one and the same wis(e)dom in Noah's ark, and consequently were all very wise and white (weiss); a highly important necessity at that time. I knew that I was speaking with the candidate for the governorship of Virginia, and began to talk politics. In the evening I had to accompany him to a great mass-meeting, where I heard his famous speech against Knownothingism. Governor Wise introduced me to the assemblage, and in the name of the German and Jewish elements I made some remarks about the hatred rampant against foreigners at that time. This attracted the notice of some countrymen of mine, who treated my wife and myself most amiably.

The next day we took the train to Baltimore, after we had viewed the chain-bridge and several other sights, and had paid several calls till about five o'clock.

It was shortly after the opening of this road to traffic. I traveled for the first time over the Alleghany Mountains, and was struck speechless with admiration at the superb natural scenery. For twenty-four hours I was overcome with amazement at the virginal creation. I had never before seen the earth as it had come from the Creator's hand clothed in all its youthful charm. Here it lay before me in unmarred beauty, appearing as it did on the first Sabbath before the hand of man had deformed it. If I had been sick, this view would have cured me. Whoever has never experienced the mighty, bewitching power of nature unadorned, in all her wild and indescribable charm, will consider my fantasies of that day ridiculous; but I can never forget the mighty impression she made upon me.

Upon our arrival at Baltimore we put up at Schloss's, where I was well acquainted. My wife soon grew quite friendly with the mother and daughter of the house. I found no opportunity for recreation in Baltimore, for I had to speak in all the synagogues, and on Sunday evening had to lecture on the college. It was most gratifying to meet with so hearty a reception at the hands of many dear friends after an absence of five years. This revived and enlivened me. The youth of Baltimore greeted me enthusiastically and treated me like an apostle of the future, so that I comprehended clearly that a new era was dawning, a new sun was rising. Mrs. F. believed this also. She was already in Baltimore when I arrived, in order to celebrate my triumphs with me, as she said. She accompanied us during our whole journey

from Baltimore to Albany, which I will describe later on.

The lively interest which my college plan had aroused in Baltimore, and the friendly attentions that the ladies had shown my wife, cheered and enlivened me beyond measure. Accompanied by Mrs. F. and a few friends, we journeyed to Philadelphia. Upon arriving at the Susquehanna, we embarked on the steamer to cross the river. This put me in mind of Mrs. F.'s poem on the three demons. I reminded her of it, and she launched off into a long harangue, in which she tried to prove the truth of the opinion she had given utterance to five years previously. My wife suggested that a fourth demon had joined himself to the three since that time, and that this fourth one was now writing novels and poems. She averred that she could never have resolved to marry me had she known that I would write novels and poems, for all poets are so impolite as to create ideals that overtop all reality. "You are not exposed to any such danger," maliciously retorted Mr. Lauer, who was traveling with us; "for the ideals in your husband's novels are quite overtopped by reality." I took the chaffing good-naturedly, and arrived at Philadelphia in the best of spirits.

At Philadelphia I was the guest of the Reform Society, led at that time by the two brothers Springer, Kaufman, Klopfer, Arnold, Goldman, Shoyer, and others. They had reserved rooms for me at the Arch Street Hotel, and I was treated most hospitably. The following evening I addressed a large audience in a public hall, and tried to arouse their enthusiasm for

the college project. Isaac Leeser and his adherents were in the audience. Leeser exerted himself from that very moment to realize the project in Philadelphia, and succeeded in founding the Jewish school of that city, and later Maimonides College. His leading thought was to have the institution controlled by the orthodox party, in order to perpetuate thus the *Shulchan Arukh*. The reform party was weak in Philadelphia at that time, and Leeser was extraordinarily active, so that the enthusiasm which I had aroused for the cause was diverted into other channels. The treatment which I received from the friends of reform in Philadelphia was very encouraging, and I cherished the most glowing expectations.

From Philadelphia we traveled to New York, where my wife left me, for she was very anxious to get to Albany. I was the guest of the Emanuel congregation, was entertained at the home of my friend, Moses Schloss, and preached on the second day of *Shabuoth* before a very large congregation. The confirmation service had been held on the first day. Dr. Merzbacher and all the leading members of the congregation favored the college project, and I was sure of victory. Dr. Lilienthal was in Cincinnati, while I was in New York.

A few days later I journeyed to Albany, where I was received with open arms. Mrs. Marianne Smith, who had taken possession of my wife, insisted on having me also. We were at home once again. The Literary Society gave me a public reception. There were feasts without end. It was self-understood that my project would be well received in Albany, for my

old friends still lived there, and my enemies had become reconciled.

A reception like that which I received in these cities justifies a superficial observer in entertaining the fondest hopes; hence I returned to Cincinnati sure of success. I was sure that every one was as enthusiastic in the cause as I could wish. I was well satisfied. Mrs. F. was of a contrary opinion. She wrote me from New York shortly after my departure. Her letter contained the following remarkable passage: "You are conjuring up a contemptible foe against yourself. His name is jealous ambition. You are accomplishing too much. You will never be forgiven for obtaining public favor so completely as you have. Take care. This foe is the worst you can possibly meet, for he is without character." I suppress the other things that this wise woman wrote me, for they concerned men whom she could not endure, although she peered into the future and into human hearts like a prophetess.

III

I HAD forgotten altogether during my trip that I had been sick. I lived in constant excitement for twenty-two days, delivered eight public lectures in large buildings, and took part in everything. Upon my return home the reaction took place, and I felt again the depressing effects of the Western climate. My physician wanted me to go away again. This was quite out of the question, for I had official duties to perform, although the repairs on the synagogue were far from being finished, and Dr. Schmidt had informed me that he did not wish to continue publishing the *Israelite* because of the losses he had suffered. We audited the accounts, and learned that we had lost six hundred dollars during that first year. Since my old debts had been paid, I did not mind incurring new ones.

My brother-in-law, Edward Bloch, had, like myself, neither business nor fortune, hence both of us had everything to gain, and nothing to lose. We bought type, presses, and all printers' necessities on six months' credit, and in July, 1855, we founded the firm of Bloch & Company, with debts amounting to three thousand dollars. Not satisfied with losing money on the *Israelite*, we began to issue the *Deborah* also, and bought enough Hebrew type to found the first

Jewish printing-house in the West. Towards the end of June we moved into the building at the corner of Third and Sycamore Streets, and at the beginning of July we were ready for business. In the meantime Dr. Lilienthal and Dr. Rothenheim had arrived in Cincinnati. They assisted me actively in editing both papers, so that these appeared regularly without demanding too great exertion on my part.

The *Deborah* was greeted joyfully everywhere. It was the first German paper written for American Jews. A similar attempt made by Mr. Isidor Bush in New York in 1849 had failed. We began with a novel, poem, leading articles, foreign and domestic news, and miscellanea, and wrote not for scholars, but for the general public. Rothenheim was the poet, Lilienthal the prose writer, and Wise the general utility man. The *Deborah* was praised, glorified, and complimented. "She" had many suitors, but few takers. Eight hundred copies met all demands. No one except the women wished to read German. For the present the *Israelite* and *Deborah* could not be expected to pay, and Bloch had to make good his losses by other ventures. Jewish publications were not wanted, and such as were wanted were not paid for. We were burdened with debts, and had no prospects of being able to liquidate them. I worried and blamed myself often for having dragged my innocent brother-in-law into the Jewish misery, which offered no prospects to a business man, and I have often been surprised that he never reproached me, although I frequently felt that I had wronged him. True, matters turned out all right later on, but not through Jewish

support, which even to-day can not be safely reckoned on.

My physician insisted upon the necessity of my leaving the city if I would avoid an attack of fever. Feeling the presence of this undesirable companion in every part of my body, I left the city at the end of July, and went to St. Louis by way of Indianapolis and Terre Haute. There was not a Jewish congregation between Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. I found a few honorable Jewish merchants in Indianapolis; viz., Franko, Wolf, Dessar, Glaser, Dernham, Herrmann, Altmann, and others, who organized a congregation shortly thereafter. I found only a few Jewish merchants in Terre Haute: Mack, Arnold, Schulhof, Gutmann, and a few more. There were also several in Vincennes: Gimble, Joseph, etc.; but these were neither willing nor sufficiently numerous to form congregations. The Jews in Indianapolis and Terre Haute were in possession of several cemeteries, and there were *chebroth*; but there were no further traces of Judaism among them. I was received cordially and treated well everywhere, so that I enjoyed the first week of my trip very much.

I arrived at St. Louis Friday morning, and went to a hotel because I was totally unacquainted in that city. I would have preferred to lodge in a certain Jewish inn; but the people I encountered there were so uncouth that I became disgusted and remained at the hotel. The Jewish innkeeper disclosed my presence, and an hour later acquaintances and strangers called on me, among others the *parnassim* of the two congregations. Judaism was in a sorry plight in St.

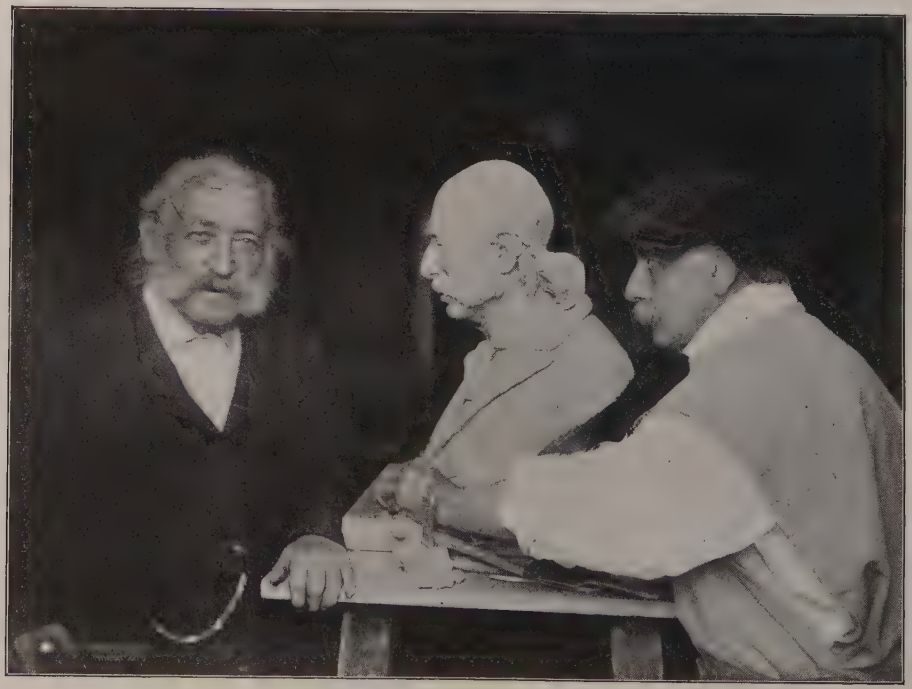
Louis at that time. A number of cultured families had severed all connection with the Jews, and were pronounced atheists, while others showed but the slightest interest in the faith. True, there were two congregations—the *B'nai El*, which was called the Bohemian; and the United Hebrew, which was called the Polish congregation. The German element was sparingly represented in both. The congregations were insignificant. They represented a small beginning. The *parnassim*, Latz and Strauss, agreed that I should speak in the Polish synagogue on Saturday, and in the Bohemian on Sunday. I was invited out a great deal, received many visits, met many acquaintances, among others Isidor Bush, who was still a faithful adherent to Judaism.

The business activity of the city, particularly along the Mississippi, impressed me greatly. A fleet of gigantic steamers lay along the river front for a length of two or three miles. The loading and unloading, the arrival and departure of passengers, the rattling and rumbling of the many transportation wagons and carriages, the bustling activity and motion of a fluctuating crowd were novel sights for me. I had seen similar things in seaports, but never in an inland city.

I went to the synagogue on Saturday with friend Latz, and found it quite well attended. The old Polish ritual was used; everything was primitive. The people cried out, sang, shook themselves, jumped and hopped about, gossiped and *shnodered*. Every one had his *tallith* wound about his person dramatically, and moved about freely. Friend Latz is a fine

gentleman. He hoped that the people would behave with decorum in honor of the guest; but no such thought entered their minds for a moment; hence friend Latz was greatly embarrassed. He winked, coughed, sent the *shamash* among the people; but it was all in vain. The people had paid their dues, and they felt that it was their privilege to do as they pleased. My dear friend Latz was subjected to still greater embarrassment, for upon my arising to preach I discovered that my reputation had preceded me, inasmuch as about twenty sacrosanct individuals left the synagogue. But this annoyed me very little, since a goodly number of men and women remained in the building. I preached a German sermon, in which I interspersed many Talmudical passages. At the end of the service I was highly complimented, even by the English *chazan*, who did not understand a word of German. I was delighted. I dined with Latz, and in the afternoon I saw the chief sights of the city. When one sees the beautiful synagogue of this congregation to-day, with its choir, organ, family pews, sermon, etc., he can scarcely believe that it is the same congregation, and yet it is so. Within twenty years everything has changed wonderfully in the West.

I spoke in the *B'nai El* synagogue on Sunday afternoon, before a very large assemblage. I explained my plans, and received much encouragement and sympathy. The *B'nai El* congregation had leanings toward reform, *a la* Prague, or rather Vienna. There was a desire for better conditions. I liked St. Louis; but the heat, one hundred and five degrees in the



M. EZEKIEL AT WORK ON THE BUST OF DR. WISE AET. EIGHTY

shade, drove me away. I embarked on the steamer on Monday to go North. On board I met my neighbor Hoffheimer, who is living in St. Louis at present. He persuaded me to stop at Qunicy, where a sister of his lived. He promised me a royal time. I found a number of acquaintances in Quincy; viz., Jonas, Cohen, Lesem, and Hermann; but no Jewish congregation, nor even the nucleus of any organization. The same condition of affairs prevailed in all towns on the Mississippi. The following Saturday I spent in Keokuk. There I met Eppinger, Gerstle, Stern, Stein, and others; but no sign of a congregation. Finally I reached Davenport and Rock Island on Tuesday. There I met Pritz, Oppenheimer, and Rollman, and found that steps had been taken towards organizing a congregation, of which Pritz was *parnass*, *chazan*, *shamash*, and major domo. I spent happy days in the Mississippi towns; the people anticipated my every wish. I saw everything, and became acquainted with every one; but withal I longed to get back into the territory of Jewish civilization, and left Rock Island to return East by rail. I stopped at Ottawa, Lasalle, Peoria, and Morris. I met coreligionists everywhere, but no sign of Judaism. I arrived at Chicago on Thursday afternoon, and took lodgings at a hotel, because I was a stranger in the city. My friends visited me before nightfall; viz., Wolf Goodheart, Schlossman, Leopold, Abraham Cohn, and soon thereafter the patriarch Greenebaum, Strauss, and others. I now felt that I was no longer a stranger in Chicago.

I had spent nearly two weeks in rural quiet. The

bustle and excitement of the city presented, therefore, a sharp contrast. At any rate, it was certainly imposing. A stream of human beings moved up and down the principal streets. Like crowds are to be seen only in the chief thoroughfares of New York. Every one was in a hurry. Each one wanted to "get there" first at any price. There was always a crowd of people and wagons waiting at the draw-bridges which join the northern and western sections with the center of the city. These bridges had to be opened constantly to let the steamers, which were loaded or unloaded in Chicago, pass through. This dense mass of humanity aroused my astonishment at first until I perceived that the business section was very small for the amount of business transacted, and that the remaining sections were spread over a great deal of territory. Chicago scarcely deserved to be called a city at that time. But the beginnings were there. A sea of little wooden houses spread over an extended territory, badly paved streets, and wooden sidewalks, with a few handsome buildings in the center—this was Chicago. It looked like an aggregation of a hundred adjoining villages. Signs with the warning, "Bottomless," appeared where now are some of the principal streets. These signs indicated swampy ground. A wagon mired there could not possibly be drawn out.

There were two Jewish congregations in Chicago; one German, the *Anshe Maarab;* the other Polish. The synagogue of the former was a large wooden building; the latter worshiped in rented quarters. Ramah Lodge, I. O. B. B., and a number of small

societies were in existence; but there was nothing else, neither school nor charitable organization. I preached on Saturday in the *Anshe Maarab* synagogue. The auditory was large, but mostly orthodox. The ritual was the *Minhag Ashkenaz* with all its traditional appurtenances. The principal members of the congregation were Greenebaum, Sr., Gerstle, Cole, Rosenberg, Rosenfeld, Abraham Cohn, etc. As was the case in St. Louis, I was also the first to preach reform in Chicago; in fact, I was the first to preach at all, and here, as there, the call to reform was well received by some, was opposed by others, and was treated with supreme indifference by still others. I was royally treated, but my reform ideas were extremely unpalatable to very many. The college plan was favorably received everywhere; but I lacked the practical sense to seize the auspicious moment.

I spent some very happy days in Chicago. My friend, Wolf Goodheart, insisted on taking me out driving every day behind his spirited horse. His favorite drive was along the lake, so that in case we should be thrown out of the buggy we would be able to while away the superfluous hours by taking a bath. All went well till one day the horse was so gracious as to demolish the harness and to dance a caracole. This led us to the conclusion that it would be best for us to take our exercise afoot in the future.

I formed intimacies in all the towns which last to this day. During my trip I wrote every morning for the *Israelite* and *Deborah*, or I jotted down poems, for I was in a poetic mood. This done, I gave myself

up to pleasure. Since my funds were not yet exhausted, and I had nothing of importance to do at home, I went from Chicago to Milwaukee by steamer for the sake of the lake trip.

I have seen the prairies of Illinois and Iowa, those endless stretches of grass, at their best. Like Irving and Gerstaecker, I have seen the sun rise on the prairies; I have seen the rays of the king of day kiss the countless bedewed flowers, so that they glittered brilliantly like myriads of precious stones; I have seen the wind sweep through the waves of grass, and agitate the vast expanse. The rich flora and fauna of the virgin plains amazed me, but did not evoke my admiration. Flat surfaces visible as far as the eye can reach exert no charm upon me. I much preferred the lake on a moonlight night, when a thousand stars looked down upon me and a thousand illusions deceived me. I felt at home, and coquetted with the moon until she disappeared, and I was left alone with the beautiful silvery waves. Every star is reflected in the deep; there is a second firmament there below. Which is the real one? I was vexed when the morning dawned, and we arrived at Milwaukee. I would have been content to dream away several more nights, but, being sleepy, I hied myself to the hotel, and retired.

I do not know who spread the news of my arrival. At any rate, when I made my appearance by two o'clock, Mrs. F. number two was there with her amiable husband to welcome me and take charge of me. They did this so charmingly that I became very tractable, gentle, and malleable. This most lovable Mrs. F. number two had been a pupil of

mine in Albany, and had learned the whole Pentateuch by heart. Of all roses I liked her the best, and I thought her the most pleasant of all stars; for her name was Rosa Stern (Star). And now she was also the best of friends; for Hymen, the willful little fellow, had converted her without my knowledge into Mrs. Rosa Freund (friend). At the wish of her husband, Elias Freund,* I was taken at once to their home.

Terrible Milwaukee! My past lived again, and all my dreams vanished into thin air. All my old love affairs and boyish pranks were resurrected. It was as though my genius wished to make sport of me. I became once again a boy, a jolly companion; for there were so many in that city who had known me in my youth and who were acquainted with all my pranks, but they have never betrayed me. Faithful friends of my youth! noble, affectionate souls! It is very touching not to be betrayed. I enjoyed myself exceedingly at the home of the Freunds. It was more than pleasant to be received so heartily and entertained so cordially as teacher and friend in a beautiful little home near the lake, surrounded with flowers, inhabited by a happy young couple with one child. Was there anything more to be desired? It was a glimpse of paradise. In addition to all this, I heard the *Lorelei* at night. My bedroom was near

*Oh, the pity of it! We have learned, to our unspeakable regret, that the oldest brother of this family, Henry, and his dear, good wife are among the victims of the ill-fated steamer *Schiller*. They were good people, to whom we felt very closely attached. A tear to the memory of the departed. May God comfort the mourners!

the lake shore; hence I heard at night the most beautiful music in the world; viz., the splashing of the waves as they advanced to the shore and receded. This sound is fascinating and, at the same time, restful. I enjoyed my few days' stay in Milwaukee very much.

There was but little interest in Judaism. The whole German population was atheistic. Very many affected hostility to religion because it was fashionable. Among others, I met an atheistic butcher, who was as fanatical as a crusader of the twelfth century. Several fashionable Jews had been baptized, and there were many on whom the *sh'mad* would really have been thrown away; for they were dead to all spiritual influences. Such as were still faithful to the religion would have been sufficient, as far as number, intelligence, and wealth went, to form a respectable congregation; but in lieu thereof they were divided into three congregations, one of which gathered for worship only on New-Year and the Day of Atonement, the second owned a small synagogue, and the third met in an old dancing-school. The leading people were Captain Levy, Schwartzenberg, the Adler, Freund, Stranskie, Rindskopf, Silbermann families, etc. I preached on Saturday in the little synagogue, and on Sunday, which happened to be the ninth of Ab, in the rented synagogue. I spoke quite unreservedly and without apology. I used plain language, and urged the union of the three congregations into one reform congregation agreeable to the spirit of the age. This was done shortly after my departure. The orthodox people—such as

the deceased Loebl Rindskopf, Neustadtel, Schwartzenberg, Captain Levy, etc.—reposed too much confidence in me to oppose me, and the friends of progress seconded my suggestions as a matter of course.

From Milwaukee I went to Detroit, where I found the beginning of quite a congregation. They met in the second or third story of some building. Mr. Adler,* whom I had sent there some time previously, was preacher, *chazan*, and teacher. Things were apparently moving along well, although conditions were quite primitive and poor. I journeyed homeward from Detroit.

Outside of Detroit, I had not, in the whole course of my journeyings, found one teacher, *chazan*, reader, or congregational official who had enjoyed even a common-school education. I had come across not a single congregation that thought of reform, and had noticed not even any beginnings suggestive of higher strivings in Jewish circles. The whole section of country through which I had traveled during these five or six weeks appeared to me, as far as Judaism was concerned, like a dead sea. There was no life, no effort, no becoming, no formation; and yet I was wrong. Every word that I spoke during that trip was a fruitful seed that took root and sought the light. New congregations were formed in rapid succession in the places where I had stopped, and questions of reform were agitated so strongly that they never ceased being debated. I returned to Cincinnati dissatisfied, because I had expected

*Rabbi Liebman Adler, later minister of the *Anshe Maarab* congregation of Chicago.—[ED.

to find harvests where, in fact, seed had still to be sown, and because my enthusiasm had not found what my imagination had pictured. It was only later that I became convinced that not a word had been lost, and that I had sown on fertile and productive soil.

Those summer months were full of import. I had learned to know the Jews in the East, West, and North. I had become acquainted with the status of their culture and their capability. I was no longer a bookworm.

My idealism had suffered, it is true; for the world was not what I had imagined it to be. Still, I had won the personal friendship of many influential men and women. This was not only pleasant, but very important. The most important achievement of all was possibly the effect of my journey in Cincinnati. Reports crowded in from everywhere of what I had accomplished: my reputation was established. I was hailed on the one hand and denounced on the other as a Jewish apostle, messiah, banner-bearer, announcer of salvation, pope, and great mogul, until I grew fairly frightened at the thought of what envy and jealousy might be tempted to do to me. The effect on my congregation was remarkable. My people were convinced that they had the greatest rabbi among all the great rabbis of this great universe. It appeared laughable to me. I thought the people were going somewhat too far; but I could not convince them to the contrary. In the meantime I was preparing myself for the contingency of a change; for I thought that it

might happen that the dear public would trample its idol into the mire.

Although I considered the two journeys, which had cost me several hundred dollars, in the light of a failure, because I had merely agitated, and not organized, yet the people in Cincinnati had grown unboundedly enthusiastic. They went to work in earnest to open Zion College at once. This was done against my will and intention; for nothing had as yet been accomplished outside of this city to assure the permanence of such an institution. I knew full well that even in Cincinnati itself only the leading men favored the plan, while the masses felt no interest whatsoever in education and culture; but I was outvoted and persuaded, and permitted myself to be carried along by the current. The idea was that Zion College, as a preparatory college, should be independent of the congregational organization, should be supported by organizations which, however, had not yet been formed, except in Cincinnati, and should be only the beginning of a real college. Being secretary of the Zion Collegiate Association, I submitted a report to the society in August, in which the plan of organization was fully set forth. I calculated the yearly expenses at seven thousand dollars. The report was referred to a committee consisting of Henry Mack, Solomon Friedmann, Ferdinand Milius, M. Eskales, and Victor H. Loewenstein. This committee was instructed to report to a general meeting of the society. The officers of the society were: Mosely Ezekiel, president; Henry Mack, vice-president; Ferd. Milius, treasurer; Isaac

M. Wise and Isaac C. Hackenberg, secretaries; J. H. Heinsheimer, Solomon Friedmann, M. Eskales, and Victor H. Loewenstein, directors. The general meeting, held about the middle of September, resolved to open a class of Zion College as soon as possible, and pledged itself to meet all the expenses of the first year, even if the societies outside of Cincinnati contributed nothing. It would have been foolish and unjust for me to oppose this enthusiasm any longer. The opening of the college was therefore resolved upon.

IV

THE pet project which was continually in my thoughts was the union of the congregations of America by firm organization and harmonious co-operation, this union to found and direct useful institutions. True, the first attempt to accomplish this, in 1848, had proved unsuccessful; but, although the plan had failed owing to indifference and disharmony, yet the ideal remained unaffected and attractive as ever. I kept on agitating the plan in the public press until finally the idea again assumed concrete form in August, 1855. After lengthy consultation with several colleagues and friends, the following call appeared in the *Israelite* on August 10th:

שלום על ישראל

THE FIRST CONFERENCE.

In the name of Israel's God and Israel's religion the ministers and delegates of the Israelitish congregations are respectfully requested to assemble in a conference, to take place the seventeenth day of October, 5616 A. M., in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, to deliberate on the following points:

1. The articles of Union of American Israel in theory and practice.

2. A plan to organize a regular synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the congregations and societies, whose plans, privileges, and duties shall be defined, to be sent to the several congregations for their approbation.

3. To discuss and refer to a committee a plan for a *Minhag America*, to be reported to the synod at its first session.

4. A plan for scholastic education in the lower and higher branches of learning.

5. Other propositions either sent in by congregations, or made by the ministers and delegates at the conference.

By order of the American Rabbis.

REV. DRS. COHN, of Albany;
GUENZBURG, of Baltimore;
HOCHHEIMER, of Baltimore;
ILLOWY, of St. Louis;
KALISCH, of Cleveland;
LILIENTHAL, of Cincinnati;
MERZBACHER, of New York;
ROTHENHEIM, of Cincinnati;
WISE, of Cincinnati.

ISAAC M. WISE, Corresponding Secretary.

Much was written, especially by Drs. Lilienthal, Rothenheim, Kalisch, and Guenzberg, about the conference and the various points mentioned in this call. There was not one word published in opposition to the movement. The signatures to the call comprised all the officiating rabbis in America at that time—men of all shades of opinion. Hence there was really a prospect of a union of all elements for higher purposes. The very fact that the orthodox rabbis joined with the reformers in signing the call justified the most glowing expectations. I was sure of a general agreement on liturgical questions and of a strong united action in all other undertakings, notably public instruction. This was, to my mind, the most important matter. The question of the ritual was discussed fully and freely in the *Israelite* in the hope of settling preliminaries as much as possible before the convening of the conference.

The points of the ritual that engaged attention at that time appear strange and childish to-day; but

the age was still in its infancy. Thorough and learned arguments and discussions were devoted to the questions of the organ and mixed choirs, this or that prayer, or its repetition during the service. I held my peace because all this was, in my opinion, only of secondary importance. I considered the enlightenment of the people and unanimous co-operation for great purposes the prime necessity. Besides, those questions were treated so fully, earnestly, and learnedly by my colleagues that any word of mine would have been superfluous. Further, I was very busy, inasmuch as the renovated synagogue of the *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation was opened for service with organ and mixed choir on August 24th. The building was a neat, beautifully-decorated Gothic structure, and, although it was located in a poor, narrow street, yet it looked like the temple of a prominent reformed congregation. The three leading officers—Jacob L. Miller, Henry Mack, and Abraham Aub—assisted by a building committee, had done the work to the satisfaction of all.

The rededication of the beautiful house of God was a holiday for Cincinnati Jewry. The *chazanim* of the three congregations conducted the services, supported by a well-drilled choir and a fine organ. Wise and Lilienthal delivered orations, the liberal sentiments expressed in which aroused the astonishment of the entire press; for the like thereof had never been heard in the pulpit. The congregation was satisfied beyond measure. The first reforms had been carried out successfully and without opposition.

In addition to all this, I was elected president of Mt. Carmel Lodge, I. O. B. B., and had to give the office my attention. *Talmid Yelodim* Institute was reopened, and demanded my frequent presence in the school-rooms. The fall holidays were nigh. I expected large congregations, and had to write half a dozen better sermons. I was publishing a novel in the *Israelite*, "The Conflagration at Frankfort-on-the-Main," whereof I had to write a chapter weekly; hence I had very little time for other work, and I wrote very little on the conference and the projects connected therewith.

At the same time I had the pleasure of witnessing the suspension of the "Mission to the Jews" and its organ, the *Jewish Chronicle*, of New York. The *Israelite* was given credit for this on all hands. We exposed the hypocrites so thoroughly that they were forced from the field. I was greatly disquieted by the Knownothing Party, which condemned all foreigners in the lump. I had read an address on this subject in the *B'ne Israel* synagogue on the Fourth of July, which had been extensively copied. A number of Jews attacked me bitterly on this account. I had to refute these attacks. This took time. Further, this circumstance caused friction between Mrs. F. and myself. She had a relative who, as a member of Congress, had tried to have a law passed to the effect that foreigners should be able to acquire the right of citizenship only after a residence of twenty-one years in the country. Like other American aristocrats, Mrs. F. favored the idea, and wrote me a rather sharp rebuke for opposing this just demand

of the native-born. She wrote that I would serve mankind to much better effect if I would discuss thoroughly the questions to be brought before the conference, and ignore political issues. I was surprised to learn that so noble-hearted a woman could be so narrow-minded at the same time, and wrote her the following letter:

My dear, sweet, noble, magnanimous, liberal Madam:

Since you know full well that I am your most eager pupil and most obedient servant, you might really treat me more gently and somewhat less tyrannically. I have never believed, and do not believe now, that women are tyrants who rule their favorites with a rod of iron. I think, rather, that you are so vitally concerned about family politics that you fear lest I might lose your good will by my recklessness, and since you are aware how much this would pain me, you want to protect your favorite from incurring this misfortune. Pray inform me which supposition is correct.

Permit me to remark that I think and believe that all men have equal rights; I feel convinced that any action which tends to deprive any man, no matter how insignificant he may be in our view, of any of his rights, constitutes a case of *lèse-majesté* against mankind, a barbarous violation of the divine law, and a destructive poison for the Republic. Since political excitement is running so high at present that even your clear mind overlooks this for the moment, and your noble heart turns away from a portion of suffering humanity, I feel all the more called to discuss the principle thoroughly and to defend it. The immigrants whom it is intended to deprive of their rights are my brethren, just as well as those who intend to wrong them, and who wish to call down the just punishment of Providence upon their heads.

I beg of you, most revered, dearest, noblest of women! to recall the old word, "God help me, I can not do otherwise," whenever you will feel tempted to let the lightning of your wrath play upon your patient, lamb-like, and most humble favorite again. Have some consideration for me; I am but dust and ashes; exert a somewhat milder rule; Madam, grant, I pray you, freedom of thought! You will be for me none the less a high lady of most stringent principles, etc., etc.

I expected a biting reply. Instead thereof, the good soul wrote considerate and soothing words,

and assured me that I had converted her. Here again she gave evidence of her noble nature.

Finally, after seven years of struggle and effort, work and contention, a conference was convened at Cleveland on October 17, 1855. Rabbis Guenzberg, Hochheimer, and Illowy remained away. The rest appeared; and with them came representatives of various congregations of Cincinnati, Chicago, Cleveland, Louisville, and Detroit. Encouraging messages were received from St. Louis, Baltimore, Boston, Richmond, etc. Isaac Leeser was present, and, with the support of the ultra-orthodox delegates learned in Talmudic lore, precipitated a bitter struggle in the conference.

We were received very coldly by the Jews of Cleveland because they feared the reformers; hence no provision had been made even for a place of meeting, and Rabbi Kalisch was obliged to engage a room in the medical high school, where he welcomed us as temporary chairman in an appropriate Hebrew poem. Two mistakes were made at the very start in the election of officers: I was elected president; Dr. Lilienthal secretary, and Dr. Cohn, of Albany, vice-president. Instead of that, Cohn or Merzbacher should have been elected president, Leeser vice-president; and a scribe, and not an orator, should have been elected secretary.

The fight began on the very first question. The founding of a synod to represent the United Jewish Congregations of America for all time, to call into existence and to superintend useful institutions, was the chief business in hand; hence, the basis upon which

such a synod was to rest and such a union could be formed had to be determined first of all. On the one side were the reformers, without fixed principles, and on the other the orthodox, who wanted the Conference to declare for the divinity of the Talmud. A union of these contradictory elements seemed impossible, and yet it had to take place if the synod and the union of congregations were to be established. The debates were violent, the opposing parties obstinate, and no progress toward an agreement had been made at the hour of adjournment, late at night. It was evident that we would either have to relinquish the plan of a union, which would result in dividing us into two sects, or a compromise would have to be agreed upon. Merzbacher and I were considered the most radical reformers, and Leeser was regarded as the leader of the orthodox. Therefore we had to come to some agreement if we wished to accomplish anything at all. We met from eleven to four o'clock during the night, and finally agreed upon the following declaration, which I was to lay before the Conference:

The conference of the rabbis and congregational delegates, assembled in Cleveland, actuated by the earnest desire to preserve the union of Israel and its religion by a mutual understanding and union, and convinced that the organization of a synod is the most efficient means to attain this sacred aim, whose legality and utility are taught in the Bible, Talmud, and history—consider it their duty:

To convene a synod and call upon the American Jewish congregations in an extra circular, to send their ministers and delegates to the said synod.

The conference also feel obliged to give utterance to the following points, on which they unanimously agree to be the leading principles of the future synods:

1. The Bible as delivered to us by our fathers and as now in our

possession, is of immediate divine origin, and the standard of our religion.

2. The Talmud contains the traditional, legal, and logical exposition of the biblical laws which must be expounded and practiced according to the comments of the Talmud.

3. The resolutions of the synod, in accordance with the above principles, are legally valid.

4. Statutes and ordinances, contrary to the laws of the land, are invalid.

When this was read to the conference during the session held on the 18th, it was received with applause by all present. It was considered a peaceful solution of the difficult problem. It was, with few exceptions, the standpoint of the congregations that were to be represented in the synod. It was clearly explained and well understood that the conference was not to lay down any prescribed rules or establish any dogmas for either individuals or congregations. It was to furnish merely a general basis for the synod which was to be called into being, without, however, pledging itself that the synod would rest permanently on that basis. On the contrary, both parties assumed with certainty that the synod would advance, and not retrograde, and all were perfectly willing for the synod to introduce reforms. All that the orthodox party demanded was consistent and legal reforms. This position was unobjectionable, provided there was a synod which would progress all the time as conditions demanded.

The two parties were thoroughly reconciled. Each one believed itself to have gained the victory, and all felt that they could go to work. A committee consisting of Lilienthal, Merzbacher, and Greenebaum, of Chicago, was commissioned to submit a

plan for the establishment of a synod. All the questions of interest were now taken up one after the other, and, after being discussed briefly, were referred to committees which were to report to the synod. Thus the plan for a *Minhag America* was referred to Wise, Rothenheim, Merzbacher, and Kalisch. All casuistical questions were referred to Cohn, Kalisch, Merzbacher, and Levy, of Cleveland. The Committee on Schools consisted of Lilienthal, Kalisch, and Gotthelf, of Louisville.

The Committee on Synod reported on the 19th. It was resolved that all officiating rabbis and preachers should be members of the synod *ex officio;* that each congregation was entitled to one other delegate, and one more for each hundred members; that the assembly should be named a synod if it had seventy or more members, and conference if there were less; that the synod should found and supervise all institutions, but the conference should concern itself with religious questions only. Wise and Miller, of Cincinnati, were appointed to call the first synod.

The debates were very interesting, and were conducted calmly and worthily. All the members present fraternized, and the suspicious community of Cleveland was so impressed that before the close of the meeting they reposed the fullest confidence in the delegates. As an indication of this, Zion Collegiate Association, No. 3, was formed on the evening of the 18th (No. 1 was in Cincinnati and No. 2 in New York). This event was made the occasion for the delivery of several enthusiastic addresses.

I imagined that the battle had been fought and won. We all knew that we could gain the consent of the synod to any reform we wanted. Through the influence of the synod we expected to obtain general acceptance of the reforms; hence we believed to have gained a lawful and powerful organ for progress. The position of Judaism was adjusted to the laws of the land. Orthodoxy could interpose no objection to this; hence a hundred difficulties were disposed of at once. The next synod was to make provision for the establishment of a college and congregational schools, as well as for the introduction of a common ritual in the synagogue; hence all pending questions appeared to be nearing a peaceful solution. Although I was greatly vexed at having been condemned to preside at the conference, because this necessitated that I see and hear too much and keep quiet, yet I rejoiced heartily at the victory of progress. It was only eight years since Merzbacher and I had been the only ones on the side of reform. We were denounced as willful disturbers of the peace, and now, in this first American-Jewish conference, the reform element preponderated. Orthodoxy was defeated, and grasped eagerly at the few concessions which we had made in order to proceed peaceably and unitedly along the path upon which we had entered. In my own soaring imagination I saw American Judaism, which only ten years before had been so unpromising, proceed to a glorious future and become a mighty intellectual and moral influence in this country. I was so sure of victory that I composed triumphal hymns,

which, upon the advice of Mrs. F., I did not publish for the good of the reading public. However, I could not refrain from giving expression in the novel, "The Conflagration at Frankfort-on-the-Main," which was then running in the *Israelite*, to the glowing enthusiasm that possessed me.

We idealists see light and hope, victory and triumph, where cold reason perceives no noticeable change. We dip our brush in golden colors, paint our own imaginary pictures, and embrace them as though they were real creations. The beloved smiles, and in this smile the enamored idealist imagines that he reads a declaration of love. Judaism, progress—American Judaism free, progressive, enlightened, united, and respected—this was my ideal; and hence in every smile of the beloved I saw a victory of my love. I have often been woefully deceived. Still more often and more woefully have I deceived myself, and that is the worst of all. My joy was not to last long; the disillusionment followed quickly, and there began a new struggle which seemed as though it would never end.

The storm which denuded my tree of hope of its blossoms broke in the East. Protests against the resolutions of the conference were published in Baltimore, Charleston, and New York. These inflicted a sore wound upon the unity of American Judaism. They fell like lightning from a clear sky. No one expected them; for they proceeded from the reform camp, whose active support we counted upon confidently. A split among the reformers, whose principles were not yet definitely fixed, appeared to

me an event painful and fraught with misfortune. It depressed and discouraged me completely; for without union among the reformers, who were in the minority, no progressive measures could be hoped for from the synod. There was hope for the victory of the reform element only on the condition that its leaders were all united. All the efforts for union were shattered, for the moment at any rate, by these protests. Like Jeremiah, I sat upon the ruins.

Upon the appearance of the second protest, I recorded the event in my diary, and added the following comment: "Poor Israel, it is not for naught that thou art reproached with the charge that thy leaders are wanting in political insight. Rehoboam did not take the counsel of the elders to heart, the kingdom was divided, the sons of Solomon engaged in fratricidal combat. In a later day Rome subjected Judea. Dispossessed of the holy land, we are swaying in mid-air, as it were, without support. Strife, contention, and disunion are rife among us. Unless the Lord build the house, in vain is the toil of the builders."

The best thing to have done at that time would have been to go at once to Charleston, Baltimore, and New York in order to effect a recall of the protests by personal efforts and explanations. I would have done this if honor and self-respect had not forbidden; for in addition to the protests there appeared in the German newspaper of Baltimore, and later in the monthly magazine *Sinai*, which was established for this purpose, as well as in the New York *As-*

monean, which had come into the possession of a certain coterie of rabid scribblers, articles on the conference, its members, officers, and resolutions, which were so dishonoring, insulting, and abusive, so charged with personal insults and fierce invectives, that my enthusiasm cooled perceptibly, my optimism was sadly diminished, and a feeling of aversion to all public activity possessed me. We were treated, not as scholars, rabbis, public teachers of religion, but like a crowd of political bummers and adventurous tramps; not like men who serve the cause of all Israel, but like a band of self-seeking, low sharpers, looking only to their own self-aggrandizement, and that, too, in pithy and biting language, the like of which we had never met with before, and which disclosed hatred, rage, and fanaticism rather than instruction and argument. The brunt of these attacks fell upon Wise, Lilienthal, Rothenheim, and Kalisch. I was the chief victim because I was looked upon as the originator and leader of the whole conference.

Here then was I, completely discouraged. I had fought and suffered so many years in the interest of reform, had sacrificed my present and my future to the cause of Judaism; had rejected, both against my own convictions and the well-meant advice of my best friends, the choicest opportunities to become rich and influential, and all for what?—to be scolded and abused like a street gamin. Although I was quite indifferent to praise and blame, yet I could not bear insult and defamation. I looked for such things from my enemies. I attacked them, and was

prepared for repayment in like coin; but this destructive hailstorm descended from my own sky; it destroyed all the blossoms and flowers of my fantasy. I remained at home, and the furious fight lasted for years, and grew more and more violent. As a matter of fact, no one gained anything by it; and Judaism and progress suffered immeasurably; but unchained wrath, even like the noblest love, is sufficient to itself.

The whole purpose of the conference and the proposed synod was passed over in silence, and the Talmud, together with the men who had attended the meeting, were made the chief objects of attack. The cry was that the conference had declared for the authority of the Talmud. This caused also Philippson and Stein, in Germany, to enter the lists, although they had no true conception of the circumstances. As a matter of fact, the opposition acknowledged later that in time all the questions of reform would have been solved from the standpoint of the resolutions of the Cleveland conference. We have advanced no further even at this day. A Biblical-Talmudical basis is sought for the most radical reforms in the synagogue; but at that time the Talmud was denounced in unmeasured fashion—yea, it was declared to be immoral, not only in newspaper articles, but also in sermons—and orthodox Judaism was represented as being an offense against reason and morality, and unmercifully scored.

I could not permit this to pass without notice. After I had fought for years publicly and most successfully against the English missionaries, against

McAll's and Eisenmenger's disciples, I could not allow an attack to be made on the morality of the Talmud and orthodoxy within my own camp. Although I had taken scarcely any part in the fight in the beginning, because it disgusted me (Dr. Lilienthal wrote most of the articles on the subject in the *Israelite*, and Dr. Rothenheim in the *Deborah*), yet, under the circumstances, I was compelled to write and publish in the *Israelite* several articles, however unwillingly. This caused still greater bitterness in the camp of the opposition, and added fuel to the flame. Kalisch wrote likewise. After I had successfully defended the honor of the Talmud and orthodox Judaism on the score of their morality, I began, in March, 1856, to explain and establish scientifically the significance of the resolutions of the Cleveland conference. The object of that essay was to establish the following four propositions:

1. The Talmud amends Biblical laws.
2. The Talmud has rescinded Biblical laws.
3. The Talmud has made new laws.
4. The Talmud has rescinded many of its own laws.

From this it was readily proven that the synod, as planned in Cleveland, would be fully justified, from the Talmudical standpoint, in settling all questions of reform according to the needs of the time, particularly as it proceeded from the principle that the law of the land was binding. Since the matter rested on a Talmudical basis, Dr. Raphall wrote an unmeaning tirade against it, because he himself was no Talmudist; but outside of this there was not a

word said against it, and the point of contention would have been removed had not party feeling and personal venom made every attempt at an understanding impossible.

The conditions which I have just described had their bright side also. Peace and satisfaction ruled in my *B'ne Yeshurun* congregation. A set of resolutions, adopted unanimously at the congregational meeting, expressed the fullest confidence in me, and seconded the resolutions of the conference. The attacks in the East and my bold defense of the morality of the Talmud and orthodox Judaism won for me the confidence of the orthodox and the moderate parties; hence my efforts for reform aroused confidence, and this was the reason why the reform movement made such rapid progress in the West and South. The fight on the Talmud drove me to Talmudical studies once again. Whenever failure was my portion, whenever I was offended and made unhappy in life, I took refuge in study in order to forget the world and myself in it. The more bitterly disappointed, the more deeply wounded I felt, the more completely I immersed myself in learning and philosophy. I learned from the Talmud a heroic but very effective remedy to forget personal ills; viz.,

רוש בראשך עסוק בתורה

"If you have a headache, study in the law." I did this now. Circumstances led me to the study of the Talmud, which I had only referred to now and then during the past few years, but had not studied. I studied the Talmud once again; but now, in the

light of the new investigations concerning it, as I had studied comparative mythology, law, Jewish philosophy, history, etc., in Albany; day and night I devoted myself to this work, although my wife was greatly surprised that I spent the beautiful evenings buried among folios; and Mrs. F., to whom I had described my occupation as a charming diversion, advised me to take up the study also of the Zend-avesta, the Vedas, and the Chinese Kings, so that within a few years I might have a very learned appearance as a galvanized mummy. I did not permit myself to be diverted from my purpose. I plunged into the "sea" of the Talmud, lived and moved in the days of the long ago, and saw the intellectual giants of the past come to life again in my imagination. The corrosive, analytical method, the sharp insight, as well as the fine subtleties and forced interpretations, attracted me wondrously, and I forgot for hours the present and its misery. No one will blame me for having read Heine's writings as a change, because I wanted to learn the fine art of ridiculing the annoyances of this life.

V

GENERALLY speaking, but little attention was paid in Cincinnati to what was spoken or written elsewhere. There was peace at home. In the fall of 1855, Zion College was opened with fourteen students, two of whom were Christians, and five professors. The three paid teachers were: Rothenheim, instructor in Hebrew and German; Cohn, a young attorney from Charleston, S. C., instructor in English; Junkerman, a teacher of the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute, instructor in mathematics. Lilienthal, who was to teach Latin and French, and Wise, who was to impart instruction in history, geography, and archæology, tendered their services gratis. The beginning was full of encouragement. The class was composed of intelligent youths, and the teachers were experts, from whose teachings good results were to be expected.

True, there was no enthusiasm among the people at large; but, on the other hand, the few who were deeply interested in education and culture, of whom the majority are still living, were all the more active. They have grown older, but not colder. This noble band was always to the fore when there was work to be done in the cause of progress, the rebirth of Judaism, the weal of humanity. Some of these noble friends have been called to their eternal re-

ward; but those that are still alive work on as undauntedly as at that time.

The opening of Zion College was celebrated by a banquet given in Masonic Hall. The elite of Cincinnati was present. The governor of the State, the late Chief-Justice Salmon P. Chase, Judge Carter, and others, were among the speakers. About eight hundred dollars were subscribed for the college that evening. Everything looked encouraging, and the friends of the movement indulged the fondest hopes.

If American Jewry had been ripe for such an undertaking at that time, as some few men in Cincinnati and Louisville were, what could not a school such as that college have accomplished within the space of twenty years? There would have been no necessity to look to-day with a Diogenes' lantern for educated preachers and teachers fully acquainted with the English language and conversant with the customs and habits of the country.* But American Jewry was not ripe for such an undertaking at that time. Zion College had been open but a few weeks when a protest appeared in the *Asmonean*, of New York, in which the Zion Collegiate Association of that city declared itself dissolved. Most bitter and venomous attacks emanated one after the other from the East. If we had been horse-thieves, gamblers, sharks, and tramps, we could not have been more shamefully treated; and yet, up to this moment, no one has been able to discover what our offense really was. Lilienthal and I taught gratis. We were never reproached with being ignoramuses or incapable of

* This was written in 1875.—[ED.

teaching. The faithful band of energetic men who stood at the helm of the movement and paid all outlays were certainly not deserving of reproach, and yet we were reviled as though we were veritable street gamins. I will not deny that I often gnashed my teeth; for I was carried out of myself with indignation at the thought that there were people to whom nothing, absolutely nothing, is sacred; but I forced myself to swallow my wrath and to keep silent, because a public scandal was distasteful to me. True, several Eastern papers were at my disposal. I was even requested by a prominent Eastern editor to use the columns of his paper for this purpose; but I remained silent rather than give the scandal wider publicity. Domestic family polemics were revolting to me, and I therefore held my peace. It may be readily imagined that all this did not conduce greatly to my health, my energy, my enthusiasm, or my desire for work. At times I succumbed to despair, and it seemed to me that Judaism in America was nigh to dissolution. I knew well that orthodoxy had been conquered; but these bitter recriminations in place of struggle for principle's sake in the camp of reformed Judaism seemed to me the beginning of the end. True, I had forgotten to take into account the chief factor, Providence. I overlooked the fact also that the general public would learn little or nothing of these polemics, since they were written in the German language.

My opponents put forth every effort to displace the *Israelite* and the *Deborah* wherever they had any influence. In this they succeeded frequently. A fur-

ther circumstance which reduced the number of subscribers to both papers was the many Rabbinic-Talmudical expositions and discussions which, though very learned, have little interest for the general reader. At the same time I came into conflict with an atheistical weekly published at that time in Cincinnati, and was attacked by all the æsthetes who, to be in the fashion, affected atheism. There was no lack of these worthies in Cincinnati at that time. Their campaign cry was, "Priest! priest!" This was to intimidate me, who had fought for progress with all the powers at my command.

Their efforts were fruitless as far as I personally was concerned; but some wounded apostles of the atheistical stripe who had some influence in certain houses where they served as book-keepers, clerks, and the like, contributed not a little towards the downfall of Zion College. Their sympathy with the opponents in the East was truly touching. These people drove me out of the Republican party, which was just forming at that time, although I sat at the round table at which that party was born and baptized. I would have nothing to do with these people even politically. True, Salmon P. Chase called my attention several times to the fact that it would be much better to attach myself to the young progressive party at whose head my best friends stood, than to work for a religious idea in a narrow circle; but I did not listen, I would not listen. I submitted to all the public affronts, even though the future of American Judaism seemed to me dark indeed.

The worst feature of the whole matter was, that I

was unable to confide in any one. I wrote in my diary, and kept silent. People were surprised at my worn and sickly appearance; my poor wife wept often enough. But I had to keep silent in order not to aggravate the evil. It was my peculiar good fortune that I was treated with especial regard and love by my congregation and my family, that I had so many, many friends in Cincinnati round about me, or else my opponents in all likelihood would have defeated or killed me.

Quite a heavy European mail lay on my table on March 14, 1856. A letter, postmarked Paris, attracted my attention first of all. Upon opening it I read: "Heine is dead! He died on the eighteenth (of February). To-morrow (the twentieth) he will be buried in Montmartre.

'Keine Messe wird man lesen,
Keinen Kaddish wird man sagen.'

I shall not go to the funeral, although Alexander Weill and the others have already taken their gala clothes out of pawn for the purpose, for I will have the toothache. The teeth of the many dogs that have bit Heine will hurt me for many a day. If you impart this information to the Americans, do not forget to add that Heine had the double misfortune of being a German and a Jew. Every German soldier felt justified in whipping him publicly, because he was a German poet and author, and because he was a Jew. Every Jew considered it his duty to procure for him *cheleq l'olam habba; i. e.*, to let him starve temporarily, in order to erect a monument to him

fifty years hence. We Jews are very proud of our great men after they are dead, and we Germans are so honest that we tear one another to pieces bravely, etc., etc."

I had read quite enough for that day. The letters and newspapers remained untouched upon my table. I called a carriage, and drove to the lunatic asylum in order to pass the remainder of the day among the mentally sick. I succeeded admirably in not hearing a sensible word the whole day long, although the physicians took great pains to explain to me the secrets of mental diseases. After arriving home in the evening I had my wife read to me from Davis's "Discoveries in the Spirit Realm." Thereupon I went with her to drink a glass of beer, all, all in order to keep from thinking. I wanted to force myself not to think and reason, for being also a German and a Jew I wanted to escape the clubbing of the German soldiers and the sympathetic "*Nebbich*" of the Jews at any time. My wife thought me very stupid and ill-humored. I would not grant the latter, and in proof thereof I wrote some silly poetry for her amusement.

My object was gained. I felt convinced that I had gotten rid of troublesome Madame Reason, and could return home with easy conscience. However, the insistent lady reappeared early in the morning. I was compelled to return to my work, and again go to thinking. I was vexed and struggled against it; but all to no avail. I had to begin again to think.

The fact that the Germans tear one another to pieces, and that no German writer escapes brutal attacks and bloody contests, seemed to me to be

the outcome of the political disruption of Germany. The Bavarian had to hate, or at least mock and revile, the Hessian; both of them the Saxon, each of these the Prussian, and all combined the Austrian. This explained to me sufficiently the mutual ill-will and the incapacity of the German-Jewish congregations to unite and work together. They were Germans who had learned the lessons of disunion and hatred thoroughly under the tutelage of thirty-six rulers. I attributed the coarseness and rudeness of their public mouthpieces, as given expression to in their published polemics, to their village life, for seventy per cent of all Germans, be they Jews or Christians, spend their life among peasants and boors, and have therefore no conception of higher culture and refinement, elegance of behavior or manners. Even in the cities they remain peasants for a long time. It was very plain to me that the Jew had brought all these characteristics from Germany to this country; for the Germany of that time was not the Germany of to-day.

But why have Jews so little regard for one another, that they revile and traduce each other? How is it that a highly-honored public applauds loudly whenever literary rowdies squabble like street gamins, and throw mud at decent people? Whence comes this wretched imitation of Christian customs, good and bad, by Jews; this cringing to every Christian fashion; this eager association with, this humble attitude towards every Christian, even though he be a knave, for no other reason than that he is not a Jew? Whence this disgusting phenomenon? I could

find but one answer to these questions: The century-long oppression has demoralized the German and Polish Jew, and robbed him of his self-respect. He has no self-respect, no pride left. The hep! hep! times still weigh him down; he bows and scrapes, he crawls and cringes. The Jew respects not the fellow-man in another Jew, because he lacks the consciousness of manhood in himself. He parodies and imitates, because he has lost himself. After diagnosing the evil, I set myself to seeking a remedy.

The Jew must be Americanized, I said to myself, for every German book, every German word reminds him of the old disgrace. If he continues under German influences as they are now in this country, he must become either a bigot or an atheist, a satellite or a tyrant. He will never be aroused to self-consciousness or to independent thought. The Jew must become an American, in order to gain the proud self-consciousness of the free-born man. From that hour I began to Americanize with all my might, and was as enthusiastic for this as I was for reform. Since then, as a matter of course, the German element here, as well as in Germany, has completely changed, although Judeophobia and uncouthness have survived in many; but at that time it appeared to me that there was but one remedy that would prove effective for my co-religionists, and that was to Americanize them thoroughly. We must be not only American citizens, but become Americans through and through outside of the synagogue. This was my cry then and many years thereafter. This, too, increased the hatred of my opponents considerably.

"But, if I succeed in Americanizing my co-religionists, will not Judaism disappear in Americanism," I asked myself, "even as the native Jewish element has approached the different sects so closely in various localities? This must be counteracted by a better knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish sources." My conviction was that a Jewish patriotism, a pride in being a Jew, must be aroused; for this it was that the Jew had lost in the ages of oppression.

The all-important question now forced itself—how? The means to Americanize were easy to find and apply; the means to Judaize were, however, not so apparent. I could not preach my ideas to the whole world, nor could I create an Americanizing-Judaizing literature singlehanded. After lengthy reflection I arrived at the following conclusions:

1. To emphasize strongly the historical mission of Israel in all my speeches and writings, in order to arouse a consecrated self-consciousness.

2. To bring before the public the bright side of the Jewish character, and to leave it to the enemy to exploit our faults; thus to arouse a feeling of self-respect.

3. To popularize by spoken and written words as much Jewish learning as I might possess, in order to inculcate in others respect for Jewish literature.

4. To familiarize the reading public with the brilliant periods of Jewish history in fictional form, in order to appeal by this means to the growing youth so as to awaken in them Jewish patriotism, for there could be no doubt that they would Americanize themselves.

After I had reached the determination how to go to work, I proceeded to do so at once. I had resolved firmly to pay no attention to what my opponents said or wrote. My resolution was to succeed or succumb. I determined that I must bring about a radical reform of character among the public, if there was to be any improvement. I continued to study Talmud and Jewish philosophy. I spoke but little. My public addresses were very short, and I wrote still less. Drs. Lilienthal, Kalisch, and Rothenheim did most of the writing in the *Israelite* and the *Deborah*. Dr. Nathan Mayer conducted the department of belles-lettres, wove incidents from Spanish-Jewish history into articles, and wrote also the beautiful novel, "The Count and the Jewess," that was founded on the legends concerning the chief rabbi Loew of Prague. Simon Tuska, of blessed memory, wrote "Oriental Legends" and some leading articles; Rothenheim wrote on "Spirit and Disposition;" and I wrote short aricles, and occasionally longer ones in case I had to enter the lists against Judeophobia. I was quite passive, lived in solitude as far as possible, and was exceedingly uncompanionable. At times I was overcome with poetical moods, which I repressed forcibly, because I felt inclined to be too sarcastic and satirical. I did not succeed in repressing this altogether, for it came to the fore in a novel, "Er kann noch sein Glueck machen," which appeared in the *Deborah*, and in a comedy, "Der maskirte Liebhaber." I had to struggle continually against the inclination to write such productions.

The leading character in the novel aforementioned

was a Bohemian schoolmaster, who had been crossed in love. He came to America with a number of partially-educated students of Prague, and found the immigrants in New York to be rude companions. I had them wander through the country as far as California in the rôles of peddlers, schoolteachers, physicians, lawyers, professors, etc., and let them describe their experiences and the peculiar conditions of the time. If there had not been so much biting irony in the novel, it would have possessed some value as a true picture of prevailing conditions.

The comedy owed its existence to the poverty of the Jewish hospital. The hospital needed money, and I wrote a comedy, which was performed by amateurs in the Allemania for the benefit of the hospital. It achieved its purpose. A gracious audience laughed and applauded. There were occasional hisses and whistlings, because I castigated unmercifully the prevalent evil, card-playing. I was convinced that I could not make a reputation as a playwright, and renounced this æsthetic occupation after the first attempt.

The public examinations of the *Talmid Yelodim* Institute and of Zion College took place at the end of June. The results achieved in both institutions were lauded highly. In order to put the vacation to the best use, I packed my valise and went traveling. I took almost the same trip as I did the year before, via Indianapolis, Terre Haute, and Vincennes to St. Louis, then via Quincy, etc., to Chicago and Milwaukee, preached in most of these places, and em-

ployed the remainder of my time in sketching novels and writing letters to the *Israelite*. I received encouraging promises everywhere, and some small contributions for Zion College, not much more, however, than I had used for traveling expenses. I saw the end staring me in the face, for the enthusiasm had not reached the pockets, and I was too proud to beg. True, I can beg for the poor, the sick, the unfortunate; but I can not do so for a great and holy cause, because this appears to me like a lowering of the same, and because I always imagine that every noble person must take an interest in a holy cause of his own accord; he who can not or will not do this, does not deserve to have his name mentioned in connection with a great movement. I did not beg.

I returned to Cincinnati in the middle of August. *Talmid Yelodim* Institute and Zion College were reopened, and there was sufficient work to do. I had brought back with me sketches for three novels, which I developed later and published in the *Israelite*. The first, which began to appear in the issue of August 29th, was entitled, "The Last Struggle of the Nation; or, Rabbi Akiba and His Time." The leading characters were Bar Kokhba and Rabbi Aqiba, and their most prominent contemporaries. I introduced the young Rabbi Meir in the rôle of the lover; Acher, the traitorous Samaritans, Turnus Rufus, and several other Romans furnished the darker side of the picture. I had to invent the female characters. I gave Bar Kokhba a heroic wife, and introduced Beruriah as her foster-daughter. She was, as may be imagined,

Meir's beloved. I gave Rabbi Aqiba also a heroic daughter, who spurns the love of Acher, and drives him to despair.

I included within these outlines all the historical events from the beginning of the revolution to the fall of Bethar and the flight of Meir to the East. I put into the mouths of the prominent *Tanaim* their own words and ideas, as reported in the Talmud and Midrash. I described as faithfully as possible the customs, habits, views, the patriotism, the heroism, the victories and defeats, the joys and sufferings of that period of storm and stress. I had in mind the twofold object of awakening once again Jewish patriotism, and of popularizing an important portion of Jewish literature.

The selection was fortunate, for Rabbi Aqiba, his contemporaries, and his pupils were the most exalted examples of rabbinical wisdom. They were unexcelled in moral depth and spiritual elevation. An abundance of truths and noble deeds, such as are reported from that time, is well adapted to instil respect and arouse eagerness to know all there is to know of the period. That epoch, so rich in achievements, was well suited to furnish expression to glowing enthusiasm and fiery patriotism. The account of how the Jewish people arose, how it struggled even unto death against all-powerful Rome, how it fought heroically and finally succumbed, must arouse every reader. Whoever has a spark of Jewish feeling must be deeply thrilled by those great deeds. Yes, the selection was fortunate, I mused. I grew enthusiastic, I rejoiced, I wept while writing. Being in the

company of those heroes, I often forgot the present. Thousands, as I knew well, read the novel eagerly, and it left a deep impression on thousands. The fact that the classical figures were Jews and not Greeks, or at least Romans, displeased some critics. The anti-Talmudical agitators were chagrined at seeing prominent Talmudists appear in so popular a garb. But the novel was read more widely than anything had ever been read in American Jewish circles.

The other two historical novels were elaborated later. The one was entitled, "The Combat of the People; or, Hillel and Herod." In this novel Hillel, his son Simon, and their rabbinical contemporaries, Herod, his relatives and his couriers appeared as the characters. The other was entitled, "The First of the Maccabees," and treated the period from the arousal of the Jewish people by the Asmonean and his sons to the re-dedication of the temple at Jerusalem. Jose ben Joezer was made one of the principal characters. Both novels were written along similar lines as the first. I am still of the conviction that these novels, and those written later by Nathan Mayer and H. H. Moos, not only established and lent prosperity to the *Israelite* and the *Deborah*, but that they had a telling influence on thousands of readers in the way of arousing patriotism and a desire for Jewish learning. They thus accomplished their purpose fully, although I never had any ambition to become renowned as a novelist. Thousands of copies of the last-named stories were sold in a second edition.

Two events that took place in October, 1856, made a deep impression upon me. Gabriel Riesser, of Ham-

burg, the mighty champion of the emancipation of the German Jews, and vice-president of the Parliament of Frankfurt in 1848, traveled through the United States, and visited Cincinnati in the course of his journey. It was from the journal edited by this man that I learned in 1831, in a distant village in Bohemia, that the Jew also has inborn human rights that must be respected by every honorable man. I remember still how he told the German country squires, soldiers, and pikemen boldly: "You have the cannon and you have the power; therefore you are what you want to be, and will not let us become what we might be. Give us the cannon, give us the power, and we will be what we wish to be, and let you be what you can." Severely as I was scolded by my aged Talmud teacher whenever I read a German book or magazine, I yet managed to procure every leaflet that bore the name of Gabriel Riesser, and I read it with childish delight. I had to weep frequently at the wrongs which he revealed, and at the mighty language with which he castigated. Thus I came to respect the man highly, although I had never seen him, and I devoured eagerly all that he wrote. It was his fault that I could not endure to remain in narrow-minded Austria after I had reached the years of discretion. And now, after many years, this highly-respected man, this apostle of the right, was coming to us to the United States, in order to see in its practical workings the most perfect realization of the idea of human rights in the world. He came also to Cincinnati, and nothing was left undone to honor him worthily. A banquet was tendered him in the Alle-

mania Hall. The most prominent men of Cincinnati Jewry were present. The honored guest was glorified in toasts and speeches. But he had scarcely left the city ere the editor of a German weekly attacked the "apostle of the Jews" savagely, because he was a Gothaer, and not a republican. At present they are all Gothaers, but at that time there were still many world-improvers among us, who wanted to annex America to Germany, and to establish a European republic at once in Utopia. That editor belonged to this class of world-improvers, and he attacked the Gothaer and Jewish apostle Gabriel Riesser violently, coarsely, and unjustly.

It need scarcely be mentioned that this proceeding of a fellow-editor, even though he carried but little weight in the literary world, exercised me greatly, and that I did not treat him very tenderly; in truth, I was greatly excited. I must state, however, that my Jewish opponents were so shameless as to goad this editor on, and to furnish him secretly with the means to continue the controversy. This reached so disgusting a stage at last, that I, for decency's sake, felt compelled to withdraw. Therefore they said to each other, "It serves him right; he is continually quarreling." This was my reward frequently for championing the cause of Jews and Judaism. At that time, however, the experience was novel, and it grieved me much.

VI

AT the same time the information reached us that Dr. Merzbacher had died suddenly in New York, and that the holy orthodox party was greatly rejoiced thereat. A magnificent memorial service was held in my temple, which was attended by a large concourse of people from all the congregations to honor the memory of the departed teacher in Israel. The three rabbis of Cincinnati spoke impressive words of appreciation. The choir, accompanied by the organ, rendered a superb requiem. I had just enough strength left to describe this and to write an obituary notice on my departed friend. The *Israelite* appeared the following Friday in mourning, and I lay sick and broken down in my study. I rallied from the tonic spasm after several days, roused myself, and went to work again. I felt no especial desire to work, but I worked anyhow.

As often as discussions arose in the Jewish camp, the English missionaries seized the opportunity to attract public attention to themselves. Of late they had taken a new tack; they had declared reform Judaism to be vague and insipid rationalism, and had called us blind guides of the blind, who were leading the Jewish congregations to orthodox Christianity. They volunteered to assist us in this, as a matter of course. It is true that Kalisch had written a book, "The

Guide," etc., in which he laid the weak spots of orthodox Christianity bare; but the book had been written in German. The English version did not appear till later. There was none other who wrote a word for Judaism. Not one of the blatant celebrities who had appeared on the horizon of late would undertake to enter the lists with Christianity, and thus the missionaries always had a free field. I knew not what to do. I was too busily engaged otherwise to be able to undertake a thorough study of Christian sources. I had to meet the missionaries on their own ground, and direct the combat thither, if I was to gain a telling victory. Both the desire and the time were lacking. A complete file of the *Faithful Missionary*, by S. Hoga, which had appeared in Berlin as a weekly, was in my possession. This S. Hoga was a baptized Jew, who had worked in London for the missionary society, and had been particularly active in making Hebrew translations. After he tired of this, he went to Berlin, and published there the *Faithful Missionary*, in which he exposed unsparingly the impostures and the methods of the missionary society. This work aroused no attention in Germany, because it had appeared in English. It was suppressed in England, and it was unknown in America. I turned to the *Zir Ne'man* (this was the Hebrew name of the paper) in my extremity, and republished the whole thing in the *Israelite*. This was not without its immediate effect; but it led to no permanent victory.

It happened frequently that Jews who had been bought by missionaries at high prices came to me in a piteous plight, and begged for readmission into

Judaism; others got rid of the baptismal water by mere forgetfulness. Let me describe one of these cases. I noticed a simply-dressed workman sitting in the temple every Sabbath and holiday. He was exceedingly devout. The man attracted my notice, although I never had the opportunity of forming his personal acquaintance. I paid especial attention to him on the Day of Atonement, and noticed that he did not leave his place in the temple once during the whole day.

Shortly after this the man came to me, and told me that he had been employed in the business house of N. N., and that he had saved quite a sum of money. On his arrival in New York he had fallen into the clutches of the missionaries, had become converted through the influence of money and fair words, had obtained employment of some kind in the mission, where he had remained for two years. Thereupon he had repented of the step he had taken, had come to this city, had found employment, and now wished to repair his mistake.

The main question in my mind was naturally, Is this true repentance, or is it hypocrisy? How was I to find this out?

I discovered that he had saved four hundred dollars, which he had deposited in the savings bank.

"You sold your Judaism for money," I said, upon reflection. "It will cost you a monetary sacrifice to be readmitted into the fold. Bring me your four hundred dollars, and I will manage your readmission into Judaism."

He looked at me wonderingly, and made a wry

face. He bargained with me; but I vouchsafed him no further answer. He went away, returned, offered me one hundred, two hundred, finally three hundred dollars. I was unmoved. He complained bitterly at having to give up all his money that had been so hard to earn. I remained unmoved; not even a word of compassion did I utter. Finally he came and brought me four hundred dollars, just drawn from the savings bank. I took the money, taught him, and when he had finished and was completely satisfied, I returned him his money, and told him that I had no other means to satisfy myself of his sincerity. He was completely overwhelmed, and I was satisfied with the result.

I have mentioned the three rabbis of Cincinnati, and must add that the *Ahawath Achim* Congregation had called Rabbi Isidor Kalisch from Cleveland to this city, so that Cincinnati had at this time three officiating rabbis. Rothenheim had no position.

We took up the *Minhag America* question again during the winter of 1856-1857. Rothenheim was chosen member of the commission in place of the late Merzbacher. We had all agreed on the principles that were to mark the prayer-book. It was out of the question to retain the old prayers unchanged, because the belief in the coming of a personal Messiah descended from the house of David had disappeared from among the people. The return to Palestine, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, of the sacrificial cult, and the accompanying priestly caste, were neither articles of faith nor commandments of Judaism, while the lamentations over oppression and per-

secution, and the accompanying cry for vengeance were untrue and immoral as far as American Jews were concerned. The cabalistical portions which had crept into the prayer-book, and the obstinate adherence to the doctrine of the bodily resurrection, were regarded as unjustified. We were also agreed that the Sabbath service, including the sermon, should not last longer than two hours. And this was made quite possible by our adopting the triennial cycle of readings from the Torah. We determined further that as little change as possible should be made in the order of the prayers and in the typical prayers; in fact, no more than the principles we had adopted and the length of time of the public service made necessary. We resolved to publish an English and German, as well as a Hebrew, version of the prayers, and that it should be left to the congregation to decide upon what language it wished to use in the rendition of the service.

Opinions were at first divided in regard to the prayer for bodily resurrection, *mekhalkel chayim*. Since Moses Maimonides had retained that prayer as it was, although he spoke decisively concerning the immortality of the soul, and says not a word about bodily resurrection in his *Hilkhoth T'shubah*, he must have considered it to refer to the immortality of the soul; therefore we thought it unnecessary to change the passage.

We determined to publish the work after we had finished it, and submit it to the synod, in case it should be convened; if not, it was to be submitted to the congregations directly.

With this understanding we went to work. Wise was the referee, Kalisch and Rothenheim the critics. Whatever was not adopted unanimously, was rejected. Wise made the English version, for which Nathan Mayer furnished metrical translations. Kalisch and Rothenheim composed the metrical portions of the German version. The prose German translations were divided among the three. The commission met in my library, and finished the work in thirty-eight sessions. They adhered anxiously to tradition; they had no desire to found a new religion, or to institute a new cult. They wished to recast the old and traditional prayers reverently, so that they might be brought into accord with the religious consciousness of the time and the democratic principles of the new fatherland.

After the work was finished, Bloch & Company had to defray the cost of publication. The firm, however, had but little money and scarely any typesetters who were able to set Hebrew type. Yet the book appeared in Hebrew, English, and German; but, pray do not ask me how; and before the last leaf had left the press, it had been derided and decried throughout the land, although only the first part (without the services for New-Year's Day and the Day of Atonement) had appeared. The name, *Minhag America*, was popular; but not the book, which was attacked savagely in both camps in the East, and rejected. My congregation was the first to adopt the book; but not without objections being raised. The vote stood one hundred and ten to eighteen. The eighteen dissentients, however, joined the majority, in order

to make it appear that the book had been adopted unanimously; but otherwise progress was slow. Individual Jews scattered throughout the country ordered the book; but the congregations held aloof. The old prayer-book was deeply rooted in home, school, and synagogue.

It was in the summer of 1857 that the *Minhag America* finally appeared. For eleven years I had cherished the idea, and now it was consummated; but it was attacked with all the weapons possible immediately upon its appearance, and yet it is the only monument of the first Cleveland conference, and is now used in at least one-third of all American Jewish congregations. It forced Szold and Huebsch to a like step, and made the use of the old ritual an impossibility in America.

The financial crisis of 1857, the publication of the *Minhag America* and of two books that were not paid for, together with the continuous attacks in the East on everything that appeared in this city, weakened the firm of Bloch & Company to such a degree, that the further publication of the *Israelite* and the *Deborah*, which were not yet self-sustaining, was extremely doubtful. All sources of help were almost exhausted. There were no friends in 1857 who had the money to advance, notably for such an uncertain venture, with the single exception of Mrs. B., who visited me at the end of August, and desired exact information about the financial situation. I was compelled to take advantage of her kindness, and to borrow a thousand dollars, in order to save the two papers in case of

necessity. Happily this did not prove needful, and I was able to return the money before December.

Life is bitter indeed, if one has to think, read, and write day and night; is scolded and criticised on all sides; is poor as a church-mouse, and has to put up with all possible objectionable conditions, in order to have the pleasure of being permitted to unload one's ideas upon a highly-honored public. And yet I owed it to my friends not to retire from the public arena, nor would I give my enemies this satisfaction. Somehow or other I imagined that Judaism needed my work and my aid; and therefore I could not give up. I explained all this to my wife as plainly as possible, and showed her that there were ways and means of remedying this lamentable condition of affairs. But she knew me too well to advise me to enter upon another career. She would reduce expenses, she said; we could live on much less, and she mentioned a number of luxuries in which we had indulged ourselves. She kept her promise, became very economical and saving. For three months I did not smoke a cigar, and drank but one glass of beer a day, in order not to be behind the good woman in self-denial; but no one besides us two was to learn how sensible we had grown of a sudden.

In the meantime the Louisville congregation resolved to introduce the *Minhag America*, on the condition that I preach once a month in Louisville, and superintend the Sabbath-school. They offered me five hundred dollars a year, and elected me rabbi of the congregation. My congregation, however, would

not consent to this arrangement, and increased my salary five hundred dollars per annum. I have never sought a position, nor asked for an increase of salary. However, the election in Louisville, the refusal of the same, and the increase of my salary by my congregation, were flattering marks of approval under the conditions above mentioned, and welcome indeed to me. I had to consent. I was much attracted by the Louisville offer; but I could not induce my congregation to consent to the arrangement, so I had to rest content with the increase of salary, which, however, helped me but little. I began to smoke cigars again, and bought my wife the material for a beautiful black silk dress. Mrs. B. wrote me a satirical poem of congratulation, in which she said that inasmuch as the congregation had allowed me five hundred dollars more annually for printing expenses, I would undoubtedly soon edit a new paper, of which she ordered ten copies in advance. I answered that I would wait until the old debts had been paid, and until she had resolved to appear in public as a poet.

[As stated in the introduction, the reminiscenses stop very abruptly. I have added the subjoined pages in order to give the volume an appropriate ending.—ED.]

THE CLOSING SCENES

THE CLOSING SCENES OF A GREAT LIFE

THE week following the death of Dr. Wise, the *Israelite* issued a memorial number. The editor of this volume was requested to write, as a contribution to this number, a description of the closing scenes of the life that had passed to the realm of eternity. This brief essay, written within the shadow of a great grief, is reproduced without change:

"May the Lord bless thee and keep thee! May the Lord let his countenance shine upon thee and be gracious to thee! May the Lord lift up his countenance to thee and grant thee peace!"

The priestly benediction was the subject of the last discourse of the master; each one who had the privilege of being present at that service must consider himself especially blessed, and must feel how singularly appropriate it was that he took leave, though unknowingly, of his people in these soulful words that have sounded through the ages as the blessing of God upon his people. Never had he preached better; although the body had been growing weaker, yet the spirit glowed none the less luminously than in the days of his youthful vigor. It was his swan song; loudly and clearly the ringing

voice sounded through the halls of the spacious temple, and the lessons which he drew for his people from that text will abide forever in the hearts and lives of those who listened for the last time to the wise utterances of the prophet who had stood for years upon the watch-tower of Zion and proclaimed the truth of the Lord. After the services were concluded, he was affectionately accosted and surrounded, as had been the case weekly for years, by dear ones and by friends, and for each one he had a genial word; the ever-young patriarch smiled his benediction even as he had spoken it, and so he passed out of the life of his congregation with a blessing upon his lips and with love in his heart, a precious memory, a priceless legacy!

From out the temple halls he wended his way to that other temple, his home, and there his bright cheeriness enlivened the midday meal; no sign was there of the approaching calamity; in response to a wish expressed by one of the company for the possession of the beautiful sermon of the morning, he promised to write it out for publication. With a light, happy word of parting, he left his home to repair to that third sanctuary of his, the college, and his last service on earth was performed in the cause that lay nearest to his heart, the instruction of his disciples. The moments wore on; the hour came to its close; the afternoon service in the college chapel had begun; teachers and pupils had repaired thither. The father of the college had remained below; without warning the blow fell; loving hands helped him to the couch; skilled physicians were

summoned, but he was past all human help, although the seriousness of the blow did not appear at first. He was carried to the home whence a few short hours before he had gone forth, and the beginning of the end was come. The weary hours of the night passed; he grew steadily worse; the dawn brought no comfort; the man of science expressed his fears for the worst. The morning dragged slowly on; the great mind lapsed into semi-consciousness; the dear voice tried to shape a message, but to no avail; the hand skilled in writing refused to obey for the first time the will of the master. The afternoon wore on; the night, too, and brought no change.

The last day, Monday, dawned; consciousness had fled; he knew no pain; thank God for that! From the very first hour that he had been brought back to her, the tender wife sat by him devotedly, patiently, hoping against hope; on that Monday morning she knew that the closing scene in the earthly life of her beloved was drawing toward its consummation. The children watched with her; one by one the colleagues and pupils came to condole with her and them. Below stairs friends made anxious inquiries. In the chamber of death naught but the breathing of the stricken man could be heard; the silence was intense; he lay in perfect quiet. As the day advanced his breathing grew softer and lower. The afternoon declined apace; those present felt that they were standing on holy ground. It was a wondrous picture. The westering sun was sinking below the hills; dusk was enshrouding the chamber; the central figure was scarcely breathing; he seemed

to be sleeping gently as a little child; there was perfect peace; for hours the faithful wife had knelt by the bedside with her arms thrown around him, peering into the beloved face, but no responsive light came from the eyes that were almost closed in the last long sleep. The weeping children and the few sorrowing friends who had watched the livelong day stood about the bed, a living frame to the picture. The sun had set; the shadows were lengthening; fainter and fainter grew the light of day; softer and softer sounded the breathing; more and more peaceful became the beloved countenance; not a word was spoken, not a sound was heard; a great soul was taking its flight; the mystery of mysteries was being enacted; he was at the door of the Infinite; brokenly his oldest colleague spoke: "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be blessed!" The end had come. God kissed him, and he slept.

RABBI ISAAC M. WISE

He came into the Camp of Creed,
The Sword of Strength within his hand,
To scatter forth the bigot breed
And smite them from the Promised Land;
To hew each hoary falsehood down
And humble ancient arrogance,
And Error fled before his frown,
While Truth was glad beneath his glance.

He labored where his duty led—
Unflinching stood in every storm
That beat about his fearless head,
And thundered forth the word "Reform!"
Earth's farthest nations heard his voice
Unto the utmost purple seas,
And all found reason to rejoice,
From Polar Lands to Pyrenees.

From depths of long, nigrescent nights
We grasp the gospel that he gave,
A message come from starry heights,
Sent forth to succor and to save.
If Jew or Gentile matters not,
For rights and righteousness of each
Alike was wrought his toiling thought,
And flamed the splendor of his speech.

Our reaching reason gropes along
His lofty path toward the light,
Consoled and strengthened by the song
His spirit sends us from his flight.

We pray our searching souls may find
The higher things for which he stood;
He fought for freedom of the mind,
And for a broader brotherhood.

A modern Moses sent to lead
His people up to lustrous lands,
To free them from the chains of creed
And superstition's cruel bands;
To guide uncertain feet from out
The darkened paths in which they stray,
Amid the desert sands of doubt,
Unto the everlasting day.

He told not of God's wrath, but taught
The lesson of His love instead,
Till narrow tenets came to naught,
And fierce fanaticism fled.
Who knew his mental majesty,
Or felt his nature's gentle grace,
From pious prejudice was free,
Nor nursed a senseless hate of race.

Yes, he was great, as men are great
Who scorn the cramping lines of creed,
Who leave us still our earth's estate,
Yet fill our nature's inmost need.
And so, with each recurring spring,
While roses blow and lilies bloom,
The world will tender tribute bring
To lay upon his hallowed tomb.

—WALTER SCOTT HURT.

GLOSSARY

NOTE.—In transliterating the Hebrew, I have used *ch* as the equivalent for *cheth*, *K* for *Kaf*, *Kh* for Kaf without the dagesh, *tz* for *tzaddi*, *q* for *qof*.—[ED.

Adon Olam. A hymn sung or read at the beginning or the end of the service; spoken also in the night prayer.

Aron haqqodesh. The ark containing the scrolls of the law.

Askenaz. German.

Battim. The cases of the phylacteries containing the scriptural passages: Exod. xiii, 1–10 and 11–16, and Deut vi, 4–9, and xi, 13–21.

Benshen. To say grace.

Beth Din. A court comprised of learned men, usually three in number, who decided questions of ritual, and practiced and performed rabbinical functions.

Beth ha-ehayim. Cemetery.

Bewonos. According to sins.

Bimah. The reading desk in the synagogue.

B'reshith. The book of Genesis.

B'rith Milah. The covenant of circumcision.

Chaber. A title which may perhaps be rendered best by the equivalent Bachelor of Hebrew Literature; literally, associate.

Chai pasch. Eighteen pfennig; *i. e.*, about four and one-half cents. Chai is the Hebrew cheth, yod, *i. e.*, eight and ten.

Chakham. A wise man. Among Portuguese Jews the rabbi of the congregation is called by this title.

Chasid. A pious man.

Chazan. Cantor.

Chazon. See Sabbath *Chazon.*
Chebrah (plur. *chebroth*). Charitable association.
Cheleq l'olam habba. "A share in the bliss of the future life."
Chideqel. One of the four rivers mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis as flowing through the Garden of Eden; the river Tigris.
Chol hammoed. The days intervening between the first and last days of the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles.

Dayan. Judge.

En Komokho. "There is none like Thee, O God;" the opening words of a hymn sung before the *Torah* is taken from the ark.
Eretz Yisrael. "Palestinian earth." Pious Jews formerly secured a bit of the earth from the Holy Land, which was placed in their coffin.
Ethrag. Citron; one of the four fruits commanded to be brought on the Feast of Tabernacles.

Gallachim. Priests.
Galuth. Exile. Before the Jews were emancipated in the nineteenth century they considered themselves in a state of exile from their native land.
Gerush. Expulsion.
Goy. Non-Jew.

Kosher. Meats slaughtered according to and satisfying the ritual requirements.
Kol Bo. Encyclopedia.
Kol Nidre. The eve of the Day of Atonement; so called from the opening words of a prayer recited at the beginning of the service.

Lamdan. A learned man.

Machzor. Prayer-book.
Maarib. The evening service.
Makhnise rachamim. A cabalistical prayer petitioning the mediation of the angels.
Meshowes. Cheap, trashy goods.
Minhag askenaz. The ritual according to the German Jews.

Minhag polen. The ritual according to the Polish Jews.
Minchah. The afternoon service.
Mi-sheberakh. A special blessing pronounced in the synagogue.
Mishnah. The great collection of laws compiled by Rabbi Judah the Prince, in the second century after the Christian era.
Mitzwoth. The custom used to be general in Jewish houses of worship, and still holds in orthodox congregations, to sell to the highest bidder certain religious functions connected with the religious worship. These functions are called mitzwoth.
Minhag. Ritual.
Morenu. The rabbinical title.
Motzi. Grace before meals.
M'shubed. The congregational servant.
M'shugga. Crazy.
M'shummad. Apostate.
M'zuzah (plur. *m'zuzoth*). Literally, "door-post." Small rolls of parchment encased in a receptacle and fastened to the door-post of the house. The m'zuzah contains the passages, Deut. vi, 4–9, and xi, 13–21.

Nach'mu. See Sabbath *nach'mu.*
Nebarekh lelohenu. "Let us give praise to our God;" the opening words of the grace after meals.
Nebbich. An expression of pity or commiseration.

Parnass. President.
Pilpul. Talmudical dialectics.
Piutim. Liturgical poems.
Posul. Forbidden.
Parokheth. The curtain of the ark containing the scrolls of the law.

Qatzin. A rich man.
Qinnoth. Lamentations.
Q'riah. The custom of rending a garment at funerals.

Rambam. Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204), the greatest of the Jewish mediæval philosophers; the name Rambam is formed from the initials of his title and name.

Rashi. Rabbi Solomon Yitzchaqi of Troyes (1040–1105), the greatest of Jewish commentators; the name Rashi is formed from the initials of his title and name.

Rishuth. Prejudice.

Rosh hashanah. New Year's Day.

R'shuth. Permission. In the preliminary formula of the grace after meals it is customary for the reciter of the grace to say with the permission of ———, and to mention the names of the guests.

Sabbath Chazon. The Sabbath preceding *Tishah b'ab*, the fast-day commemorative of the destruction of Jerusalem. This Sabbath received its name from the first word of the first chapter of Isaiah, the prophetical section read on that day in the synagogue as the *haftarah.*

Sabbath Nach'mu. The Sabbath of consolation; the Sabbath following *Tishah b'ab.* This Sabbath received its name from the first word of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, the prophetical section read on that day in the synagogue as the *haftarah.*

Sefer hachayim. The Book of Life—a euphemism; being the title of the volume containing the rules and regulations to be observed in case of death.

Shacharith. The morning service.

Shalom alekhem. "Peace be upon you!" The formula of greeting or salutation.

Shamash. Sexton.

Shir Tziyon. "The Song of Zion;" a collection by Sulzer, the great composer of synagogal music.

Shiur. "Shiur lernen" was the jargon term used to designate the custom of reading and explaining passages from books of Hebrew lore, on important occasions, such as the anniversary of a death, the evenings of certain holidays, the dedication of a new home, etc.

Shlemihl. An awkward fellow.

Sh'loach Manoth. The sending of gifts.

Shmad. Conversion.

Shnoder. The sums given by worshipers in the synagogue in payment for the "honors" connected with the public worship, or as a thank-offering. The word is derived from the Hebrew *nadar*, "to vow."

Shochet. Slaughterer.

Shulchan Arukh. The code compiled by Rabbi Joseph Caro, and accepted by orthodox Jews as the norm of authority.

Sidrah. The weekly portion read from the Pentateuch in the synagogue.

Simchath torah. "The Day of Rejoicing in the Law;" a rabbinical holiday celebrated on the twenty-third of Tishri, the day following the closing day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

S'lichoth. Supplications.

S'roress. The nobility.

Tallith. Praying shawl.

Tana'im. The title applied to the Jewish teachers and authorities in Palestine from 10 to 220 after the Christian era.

Targumim. The Aramaic translations of the Bible.

T'fillin. Phylacteries.

Tishah b'ab. The ninth day of Ab, a fast-day commemorative of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Tola. Christ.

T'refah. Forbidden thing.

Tzelem. Cross.

Tzitzith. Fringes on the praying shawl.

Yad hachazaqah. The code of Talmudical laws made by Moses Maimonides (1135–1204).

Yahryeit. Anniversary of death.

Y'qum Purqan. A prayer for the *Resh G'lutha* or exilareh and the heads of the Babylonian Academies.

Yigdal. A hymn sung at the close of the service; it gives, in poetical form, the thirteen articles of the so-called Maimonidean creed.

Yom tob. Holiday.

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יהי אור

LET THERE BE LIGHT

In Memory - Isaac Weil

by his family